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talks new WWI film

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How two Guardsmen made history in 1918

PLUS:
Fokker Eindecker
The Normans
JFK's coconut

FUTURE
ISSUE 060

KING & COUNTRY'S

Banzai Charge!

A 'BANZAI CHARGE' was the term used by Allied Forces in WW2 to describe the *'human wave attacks'* launched by Japanese infantry units. The actual term originated from the Japanese cry, *"Tennoheika Banzai"* originally translated as *"Long live his majesty the Emperor"* simply abbreviated to *"Banzai"*.

BANZAI IN HISTORY

Throughout Japanese history the banzai charge was seen to be an honorable suicide attack, much more preferable to either a humiliating surrender or a disgraceful capture by an enemy.

During the 1930's in China, the Japanese Army found ***'Banzai Charges'*** to be militarily successful even when they faced a numerically superior enemy. The belief in raw bravery and cold steel to always carry the day may have been successful against a less disciplined and poorly trained and equipped enemy but WW2 would tell a different story...

JN045 *Japanese Artillery Set*

BANZAI IN WW2

As the war in the Pacific progressed and early Japanese successes were eclipsed they still, with ever-growing frustration, continued to mount suicidal *'banzai attacks'*.

This time however they were opposed by soldiers *(Americans, British and Australian)* who were well-armed with all kinds of automatic weapons and skilled in their use. No amount of boldness and bravery, even that backed up by rifles, swords and bayonets could compete on the battlefield with plentiful supplies of machine guns and well-trained men to use them.

JN041
Type 95 "Ha-Go" Light Tank

K&C's LATEST RELEASES

In support of King & Country's existing Japanese Army figures we are releasing no less than *8 new Japanese infantrymen* as well as an extra *Type 95 'Ha-Go' Light Tank* **JN041**, this time with its top turret hatch closed up and ready for action.

Providing much-needed artillery fire is the **JN045** set, the *Type 92 Infantry Gun* complete with its 3-man crew.

Finally, there is **JN047** and **JN048**... ***Each 2-man set*** shows a pair of brave but dead Japanese soldiers who have paid the ultimate price for their failed ***'Banzai Charge'***. All of these new sets continue to tell the ongoing story of the War in the Pacific and are very useful additions to those already released.

JN047 *Dead Japanese Set #1*

Dead Japanese Set #2 **JN048**

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KING & COUNTRY HEADQUARTERS
Suite 2301, 23rd Floor, No.3 Lockhart Road,
Wanchai, Hong Kong
Tel : (852) 2861 3450 Fax : (852) 2861 3806
E-mail : sales@kingandcountry.com

KING & COUNTRY SHOP
245, Pacific Place, 88 Queensway,
Hong Kong
Tel : (852) 2525 8603
Website : www.kingandcountry.com

KINGS X
206 Alamo Plaza, San Antonio, TX 78205, USA
Tel : (210) 226 7000 Fax : (210) 226 7117
E-mail : sales@kingsx.com
Website : www.kingsx.com

Welcome

Following his defeat at Waterloo, Napoleon's fleeing carriage is surrounded by Prussians at Genappe, and the French emperor barely evades capture

Image: Getty

By the evening of 18 June 1815, over 40,000 soldiers lay dead, wounded or missing in the bloody field of Waterloo. Napoleon's army, and the emperor himself, were in full retreat, and the Anglo-Prussian allies were victorious.

However, as the French fled the field, one square of battle-hardened Old Guard stood firm and refused to surrender. This was the resolute last stand of veteran troops, many of whom had served during the height of the Grande Armée's powers.

This issue, historian Dr. Bernard Wilkin explores who these crack soldiers were, how they gained their superior reputation, and takes us through the tactics of their final battle.

Tim Williamson
Editor

CONTRIBUTORS

TOM GARNER

Tom spoke with two WWII soldiers this month. Over on page 68, Charles Wright discusses his service as a commando medic, while Normandy veteran George Evans explains how his experience of war made him a pacifist (page 86).

LEIGH NEVILLE

In his new book *Day Of The Rangers*, Leigh explores the Battle of Mogadishu through the eyes of the soldiers on the ground. Over on page 52, he shares the first-hand accounts of Delta Force operatives who were involved in the battle.

GILAD JAFFE

As fighting on the Western Front reached its crescendo in 1918, the Palestine theatre was similarly entering its final throes. On page 34 Israeli historian Gilad recounts one of its final battles, at the Daughters of Jacob Bridge.

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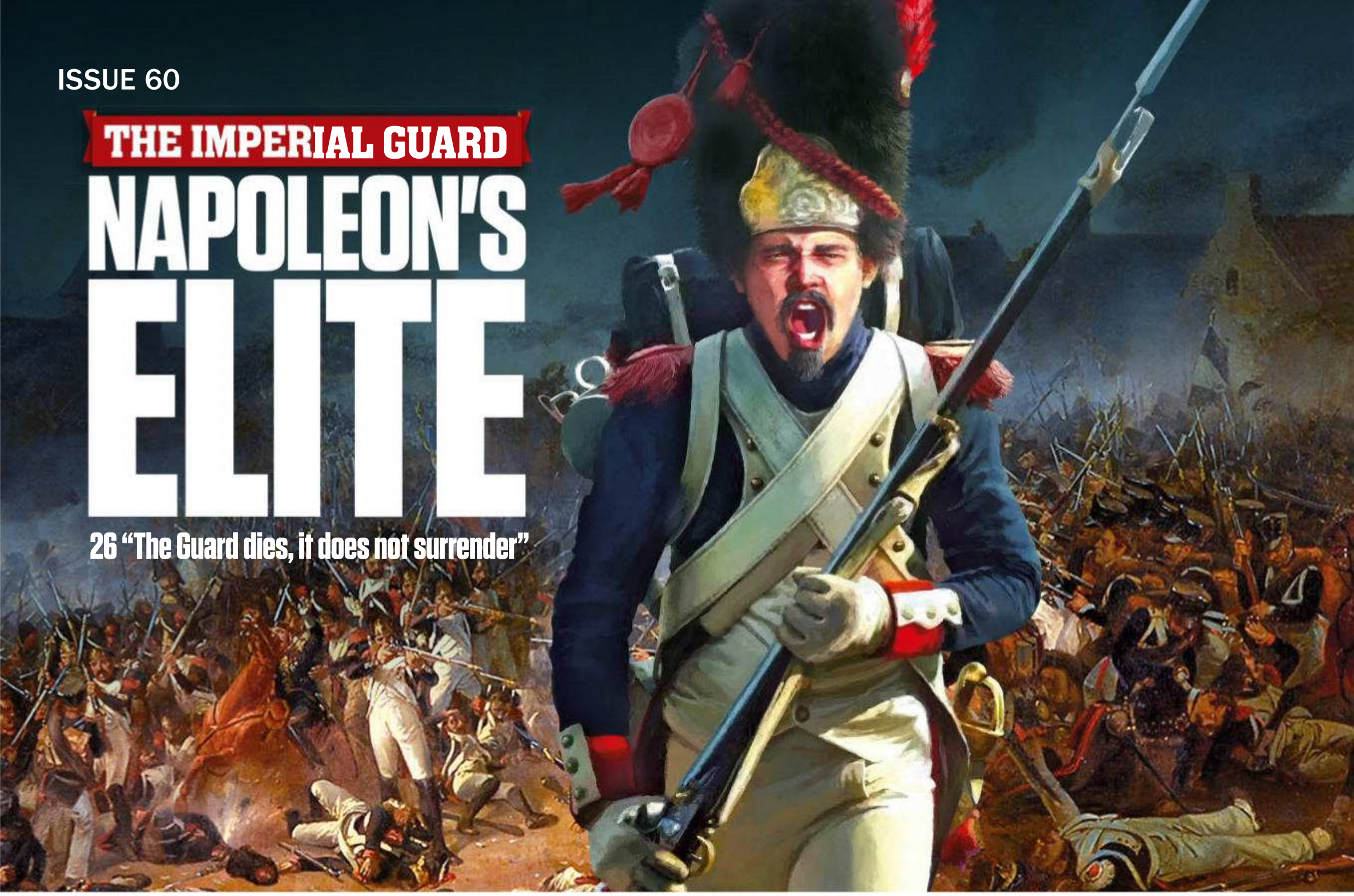
ISSUE 60

THE IMPERIAL GUARD

NAPOLEON'S ELITE

26 "The Guard dies, it does not surrender"



Frontline

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DELTA AT MOG

52 Delta Force survivors give their take on the "longest firefight involving American troops since Vietnam"

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This issue we are giving away a free PDF of the History of War Book of the Napoleonic Wars. Explore the fight that brought Europe to its knees – enter this URL into your browser to receive your free download

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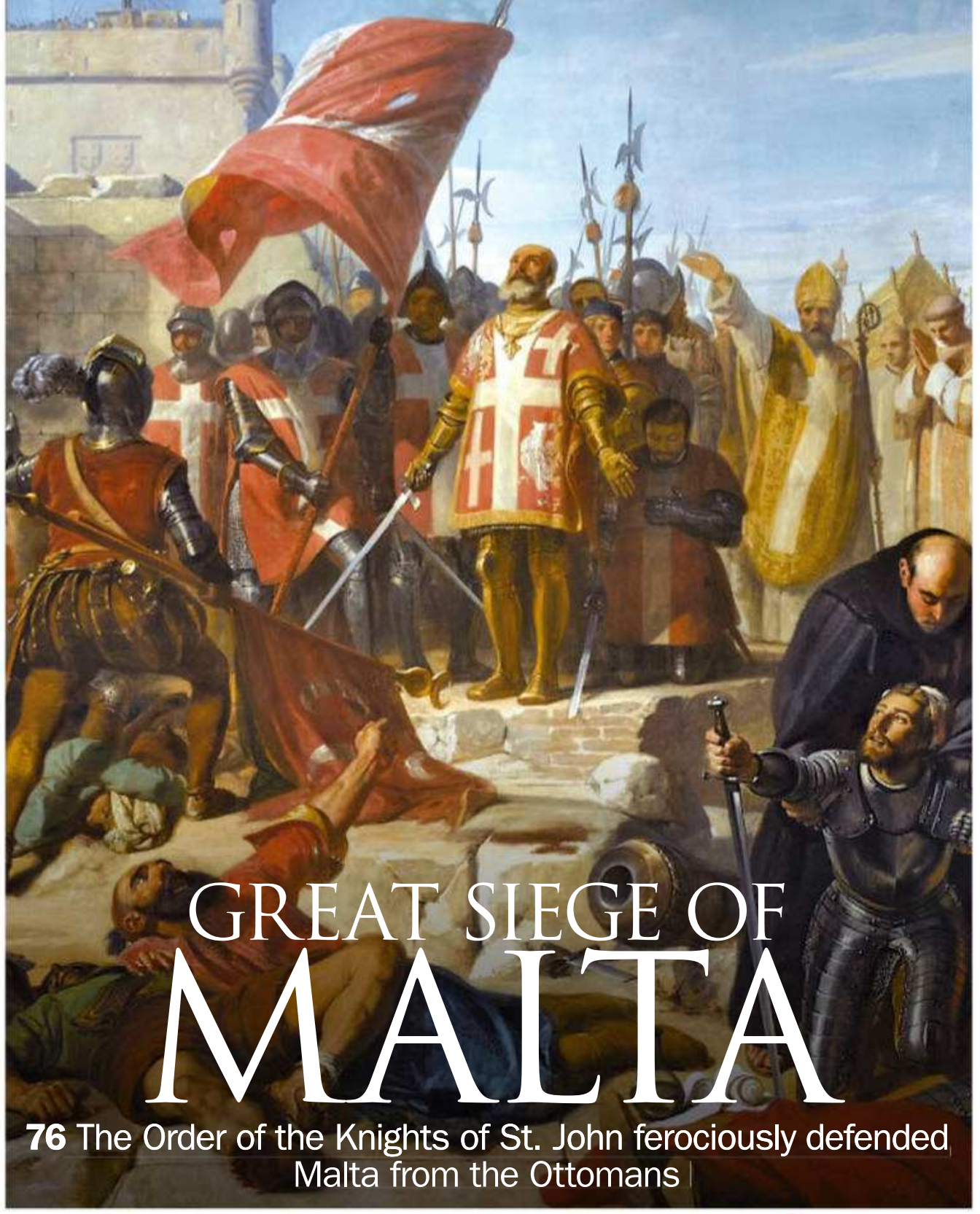
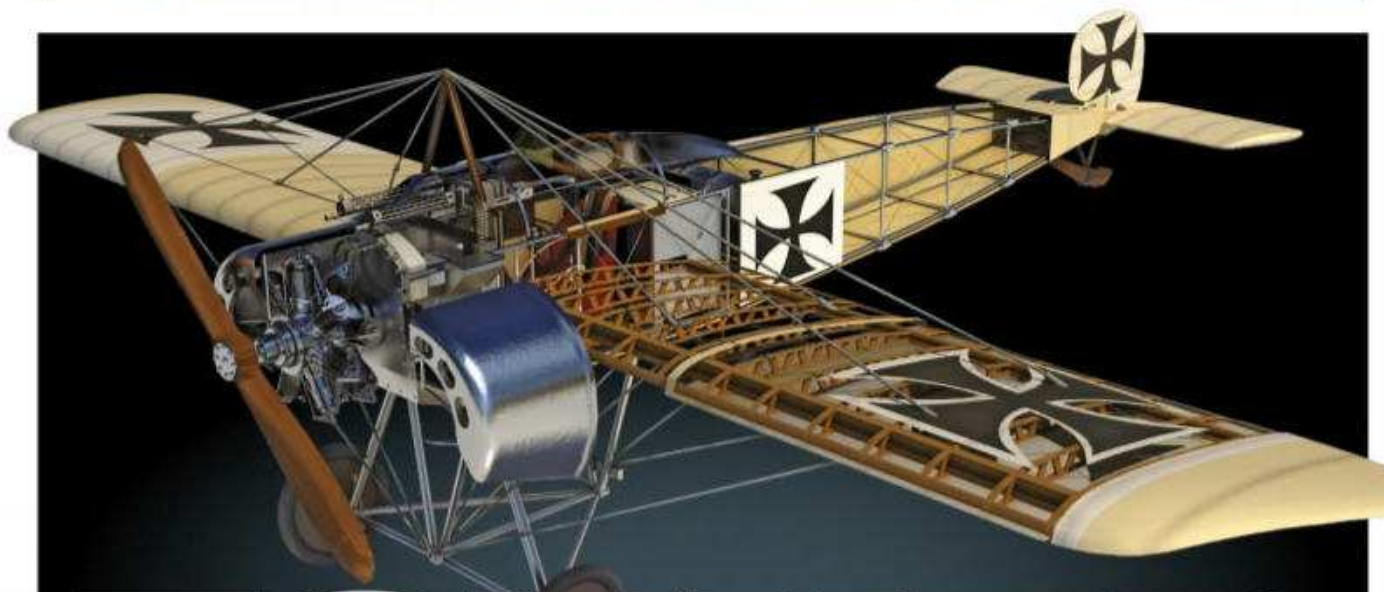


GREAT SIEGE OF MALTA

76 The Order of the Knights of St. John ferociously defended Malta from the Ottomans



FOKKER EINDECKER

40 No Allied plane could compete with the Eindecker during the 'Fokker Scourge' of 1915

CONTENTS

© Getty

WAR in FOCUS

OPERATION CEDAR FALLS

Taken: ***January 1967***

US armoured personnel carriers from the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry burn fields in the so-called Iron Triangle region of Vietnam. Not far north of Saigon, this region of thick jungle and grassland concealed a high number of Viet Minh forces, as well as a vast network of underground tunnels, many of which dated back to the French colonial conflict. Operation Cedar Falls was a huge operation of mainly US and South Vietnamese forces to drive the North Vietnamese from this region.

WAR in FOCUS

FROM HULLUCH, WITH LOVE

Taken: ***24 August 1917***

This picture postcard, dated 24 August 1917, was sent home by Josef vom Fernspreschtrupp, possibly identified with a small ‘X’ inscribed later on the front. In the note to his wife Henriette, he wrote, “I am not in the best of mood, because the sun was just shining in my eyes.” The postcard was sent from La Bassée, northern France, in or near the village of Hulluch.

Meine treue Kleine!

Schicke Dir hier einen kleinen Rückblick von der Fernsprech-Truppe 28 ". Bataillon. Hoffentlich sind Dich alle gut getroffen. Denn Du kannst mir glaube nur in den Augen. Du siehst mir viel zu ernst drauf sind.

Unter Freunde Grüßen und Küssen verbleibe ich Dein treuer Josef.

Wellens Hüllüch (La Bassee
24. August 1917

WAR in FOCUS

SOVIET SCRAPYARD

Taken: ***13 January 2010***

A rusting tank carries the message, “I love you” in a junkyard of Soviet armoured vehicles and tanks at the Kabul Military Training Camp. The USSR began its invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and installed more than 10,000 troops to support its puppet prime minister but failed to extend power much beyond Kabul. It ended in the withdrawal of the Soviets a decade later.

© Getty

WAR in FOCUS

OUT ON THE PULL

Taken: ***12 February 1940***

A drifting mine is hauled onto a beach by British military personnel in southwest England. Hundreds of destructive sea mines were dropped into the English Channel after the outbreak of World War II, including buoyant and submerged magnetic explosives. The Allies also utilised mines in order to protect key harbours from U-boat attacks.

© Getty

Roger I of Sicily defeats Sicilian Muslims at the Battle of Cerami in 1063. This Norman victory paves the way for the capture of Palermo and eventually the rest of Sicily

TIMELINE OF THE... NORMANS

These fearsome northern French descendents of Vikings invaded and conquered many parts of Europe and the Near East, including Britain, southern Italy and the Levant

NORMAN CONQUEST OF SOUTHERN ITALY

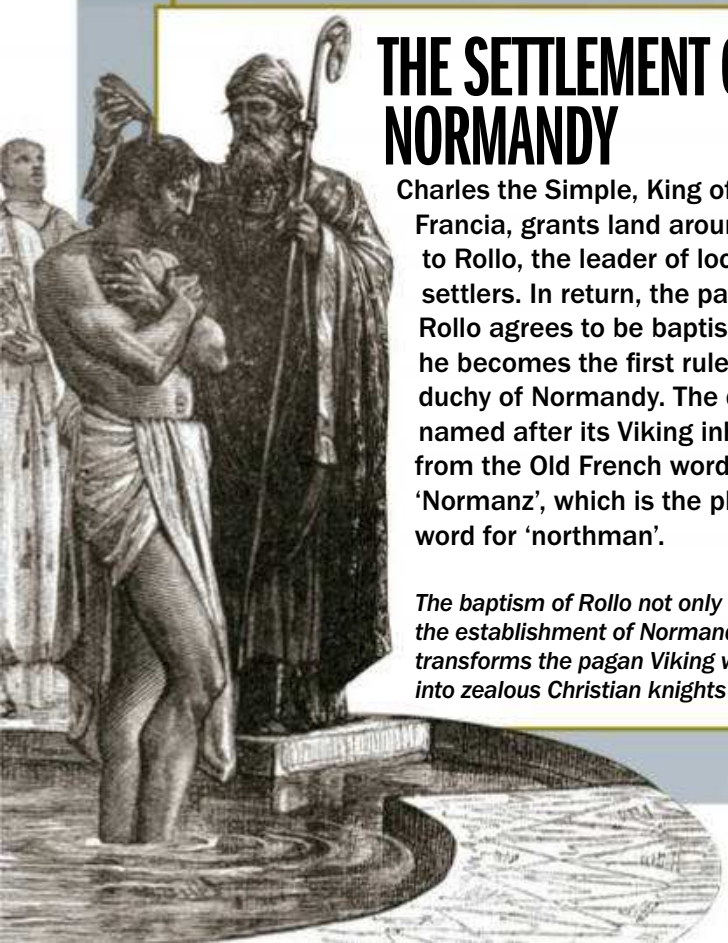
Normans begin to settle in southern Italy and often act as mercenaries for petty rulers. Over the course of decades, Norman warriors establish their own lordships and even capture Pope Leo IX. Subsequent papal endorsements lead to the conquest of Sicily and the creation of a Norman Sicilian monarchy.

911 — 999-1139 — 1040-1185 — 1066

THE SETTLEMENT OF NORMANDY

Charles the Simple, King of West Francia, grants land around Rouen to Rollo, the leader of local Viking settlers. In return, the pagan Rollo agrees to be baptised and he becomes the first ruler of the duchy of Normandy. The duchy is named after its Viking inhabitants from the Old French word 'Normanz', which is the plural word for 'northman'.

The baptism of Rollo not only leads to the establishment of Normandy but also transforms the pagan Viking warriors into zealous Christian knights



BYZANTINE-NORMAN WARS

Normans capture Byzantine provinces in southern Italy and launch invasions of the Balkans. The Byzantines fight back and, despite Norman ambitions to capture Constantinople, they are eventually forced to withdraw.

A coin depicting Robert Guiscard de Hauteville. Guiscard spends many years fighting the Byzantines, culminating in his death on campaign in western Greece

CONQUEST OF ENGLAND

William, Duke of Normandy invades England to claim the throne from Harold II. After a bloody battle at Hastings, Harold is killed and William is crowned king. The Normans brutally subjugate the English and profoundly change the kingdom.

Norman knights and archers at the Battle of Hastings, as depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry. 1066 is one of the most momentous and consequential years in English history

"OVER THE COURSE OF DECADES, NORMAN WARRIORS ESTABLISH THEIR OWN LORDSHIPS AND EVEN CAPTURE POPE LEO IX"

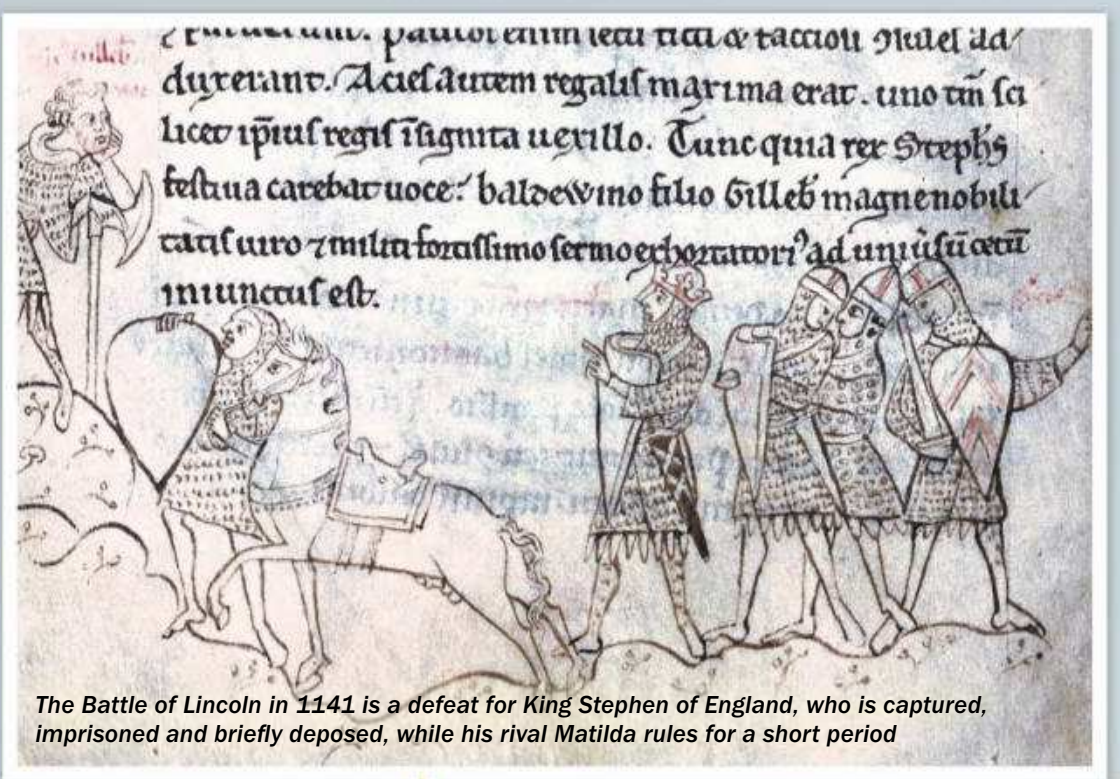
FIRST CRUSADE

Normans are at the forefront of military operations to take the Holy Land for Christendom, and they help carve out the principality of Antioch in 1098. Tancred and Robert II, Duke of Normandy are prominent Norman crusaders who capture Jerusalem in 1099.

The Siege of Antioch leads to the establishment of a Norman-led principality in 1098 that endures until 1268. This is longer than Norman rule in England or Sicily

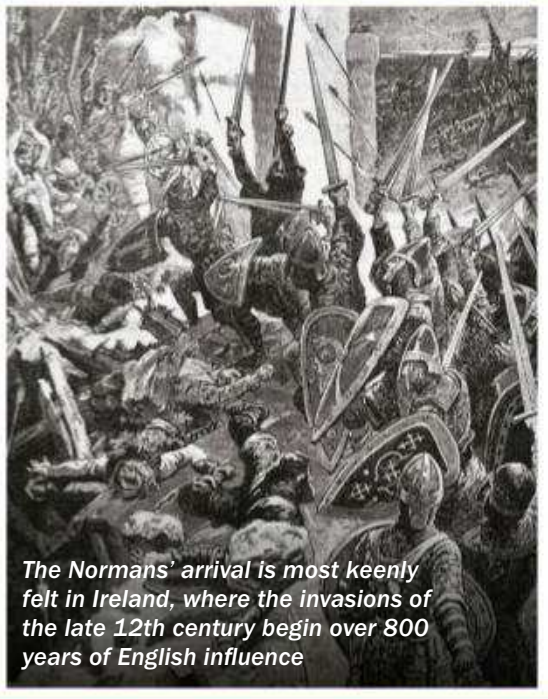
THE ANARCHY

England and Normandy descend into a vicious civil war for the English crown between King Stephen and Henry I's daughter Matilda. The Norman dynasty in England ends upon Stephen's death, when Matilda's son Henry II becomes the first Plantagenet king.



The Battle of Lincoln in 1141 is a defeat for King Stephen of England, who is captured, imprisoned and briefly deposed, while his rival Matilda rules for a short period

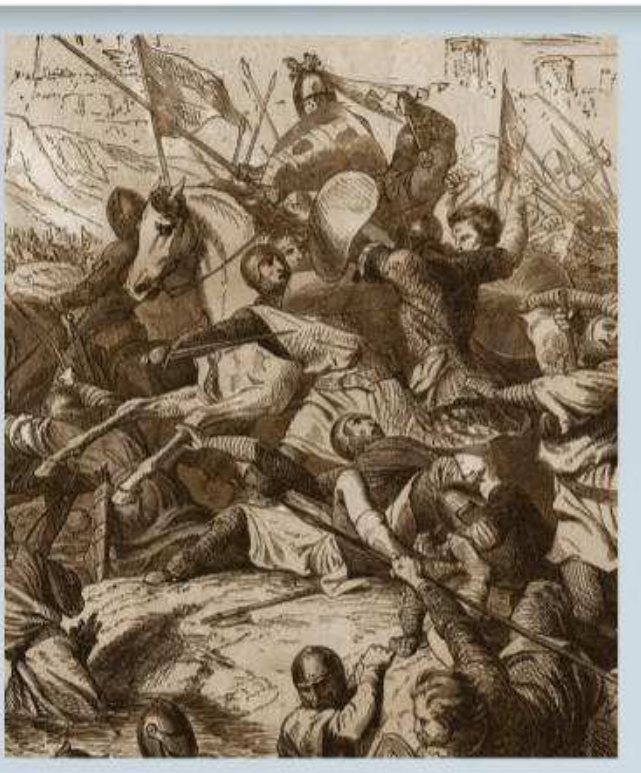
1067-1171 · 1095-99 · 1135-54 · 1202-04



The Normans' arrival is most keenly felt in Ireland, where the invasions of the late 12th century begin over 800 years of English influence

INVASIONS OF WALES, SCOTLAND & IRELAND

Following the conquest of England, the Normans spread their influence over the Celtic parts of Britain with a series of invasions, settlements and the construction of castles. Their military and cultural impact permanently alters the course of British history.



FRENCH INVASION OF NORMANDY

King John of England loses Normandy to the French after being defeated on campaign by Philip II of France. Only the Channel Islands remain from John's territories in the duchy. As a result, the Norman aristocracy in England gradually becomes fully assimilated into English society.

The Siege of Château Gaillard ends Anglo-Norman rule in Normandy and turns the once all-conquering duchy over to the French crown

Images: Alamy, Getty

BATTLES, SIEGES & CONQUESTS

Although Norman knights fought in Iberia, the Balkans and the Near East, their most direct impact was felt in Normandy, the British Isles and southern Italy

BATTLE OF DRUIM DEARG
14 MAY 1260 DOWNPATRICK, COUNTY DOWN, IRELAND

BATTLE OF ANGLESEY SOUND
1098 MENAI STRAIT, ANGLESEY, WALES

BATTLE OF CRUG MAWR
OCTOBER 1136 PENPARC, CEREDIGION, WALES

BATTLE OF ÁTH AN CHIP
1270 CARRICK-ON-SHANNON, COUNTY LEITRIM, IRELAND

SACK OF DUN GALLIMHE
1247 GALWAY, COUNTY GALWAY, IRELAND

SIEGE OF WATERFORD
1170 WATERFORD, COUNTY WATERFORD, IRELAND

Left: A Norman force allies with the Irish of Leinster to besiege Waterford. The Normans are led by Richard de Clare, Second Earl of Pembroke, who becomes known as 'Strongbow'

NORMAN PEASANTS' REVOLT
996 NORMANDY, FRANCE

BATTLE OF VAL-ÈS-DUNES
1047 CONTEVILLE, NORMANDY, FRANCE

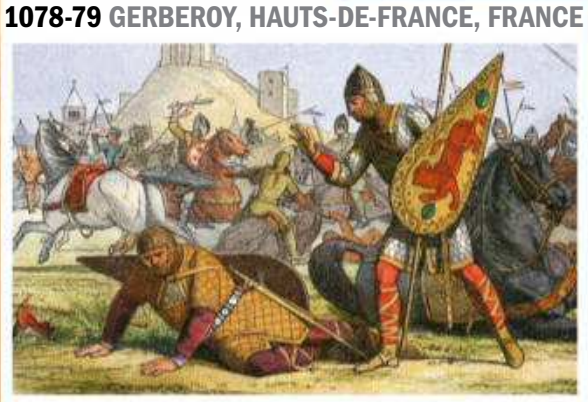
BATTLE OF TINCHEBRAY
28 SEPTEMBER 1106 TINCHEBRAY, NORMANDY, FRANCE

BATTLE OF SEGRÉ
1066 SEGRÉ, PAYS DE LA LOIRE, FRANCE

BATTLE OF BRÉMULE
20 AUGUST 1119 GAILLARD-CRESSENVILLE, NORMANDY, FRANCE

SIEGE OF THIMERT
1058-60 THIMERT-GÂTELLES, CENTRE-VAL DE LOIRE, FRANCE

SIEGE OF GERBEROY
1078-79 GERBEROY, HAUTS-DE-FRANCE, FRANCE



William the Conqueror is wounded while fighting his eldest son Robert Curthose during a battle at Gerberoy

1 BATTLE OF CIVITATE

18 JUNE 1053 FOGGIA, APULIA, ITALY

Humphrey de Hauteville defeats a papal coalition and Pope Leo IX is taken prisoner. The battle is the culmination of years of Norman mercenary campaigning in southern Italy.

2 BATTLE OF MORTEMER

1054 MORTEMER, NORMANDY, FRANCE

Henry I of France occupies the Norman town of Mortemer but is defeated when William the Bastard (later the 'Conqueror') sets the town alight. William's victory enables him to secure his position as duke of Normandy.

3 BATTLE OF VARAVILLE

AUGUST 1057 VARAVILLE, NORMANDY, FRANCE

After Mortemer, Henry I of France decides to conquer Normandy, but Duke William surprises the French as they cross a ford. Many of Henry's men drown, and the king abandons any further attempts to reduce William's power.

4 BATTLE OF CERAMI

JUNE 1063 CERAMI, SICILY, ITALY

Cerami is a major victory against Muslim forces in Sicily. Roger de Hauteville (Roger I of Sicily) routs Kalbid and Zirid forces. The battle enables the Normans to capture Palermo.

5 BATTLE OF HASTINGS

14 OCTOBER 1066 BATTLE, EAST SUSSEX, ENGLAND

Hastings marks the high point of Norman military might. England is conquered in one battle, where Duke William of Normandy defeats and kills Harold II, the last Anglo-Saxon English king.

Norman knights attack Anglo-Saxon soldiers who have formed a shield wall at Hastings. Cavalry plays a decisive part in William the Conqueror's victory

6 CONSTRUCTION OF THE WHITE TOWER

1078-1100 LONDON, ENGLAND

Stone castles are the most formidable military symbol of Norman authority. William the Conqueror builds the most famous castle in London, which is known as the 'White Tower'.

The White Tower is the most complete 11th-century castle in existence and was one of the largest in Christendom. It forms the central part of the Tower of London

"STONE CASTLES ARE THE MOST FORMIDABLE MILITARY SYMBOL OF NORMAN AUTHORITY"

7 SIEGE OF WEXFORD

MAY 1169 WEXFORD, COUNTY WEXFORD, IRELAND

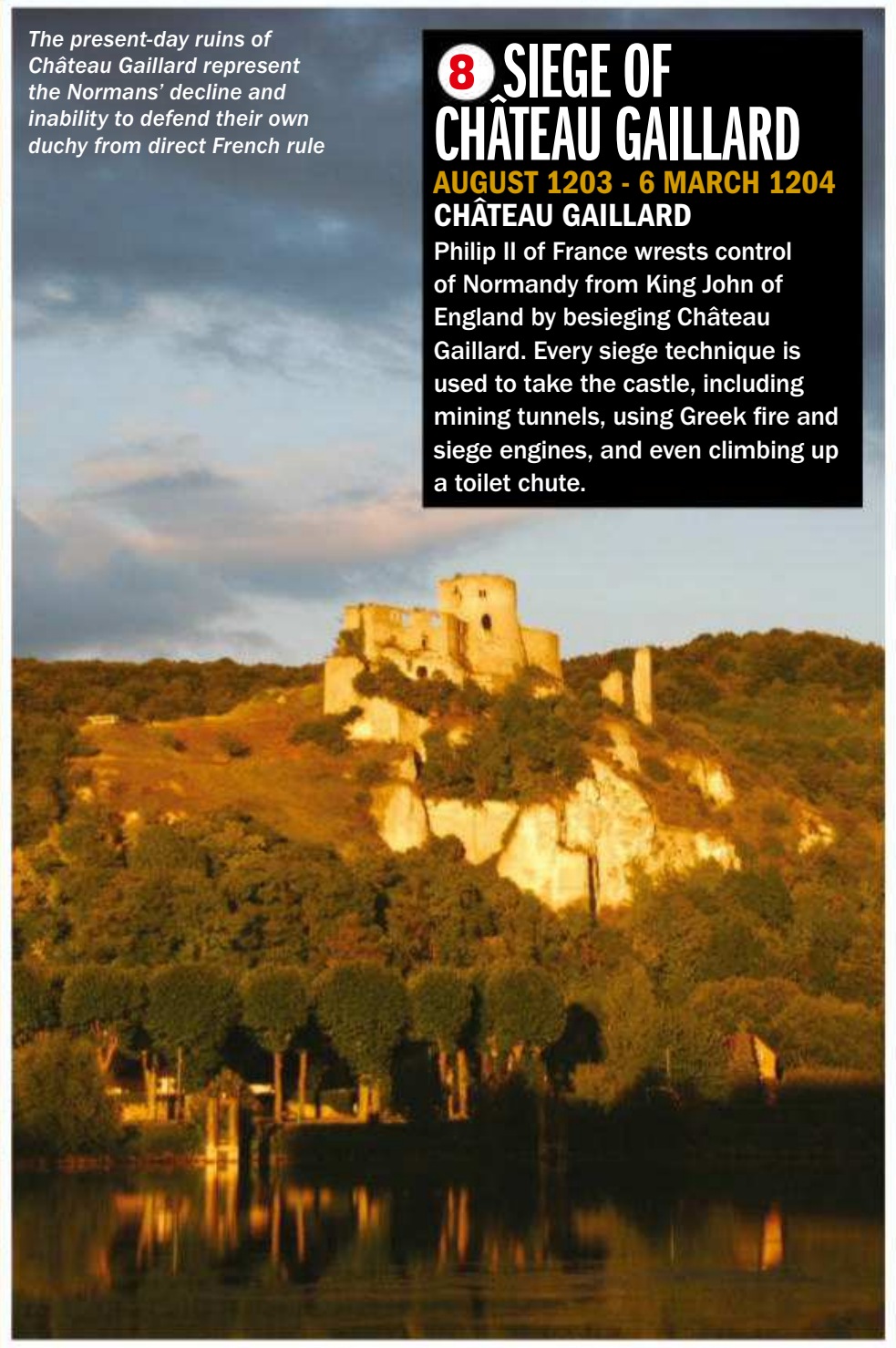
Robert FitzStephen leads an expeditionary force of Norman soldiers to assist Diarmait Mac Murchada in southeast Ireland, and they advance on Wexford. The town falls and Wexford comes under Norman control, along with areas of southeast Leinster.

The present-day ruins of Château Gaillard represent the Normans' decline and inability to defend their own duchy from direct French rule

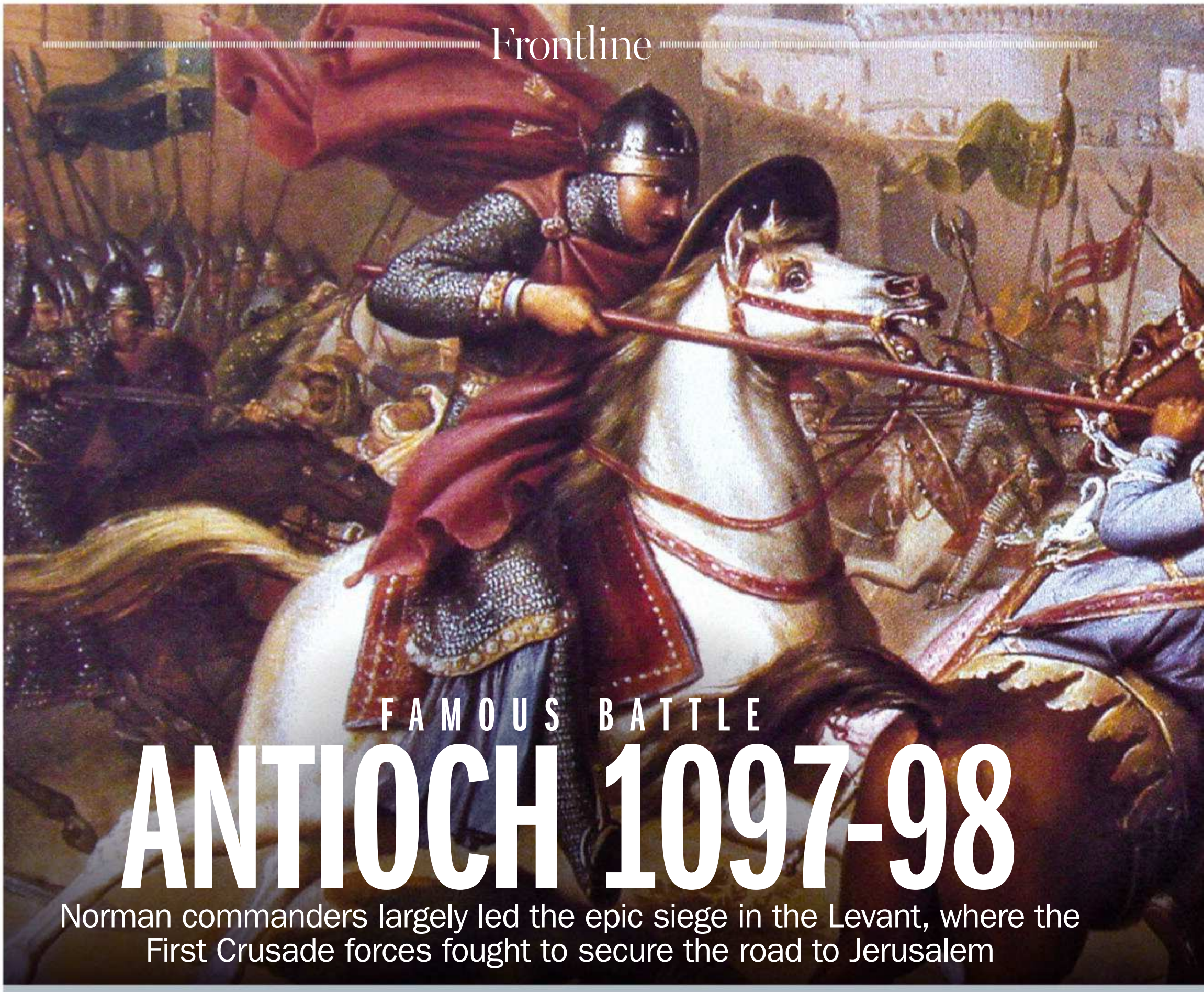
8 SIEGE OF CHÂTEAU GAILLARD

AUGUST 1203 - 6 MARCH 1204 CHÂTEAU GAILLARD

Philip II of France wrests control of Normandy from King John of England by besieging Château Gaillard. Every siege technique is used to take the castle, including mining tunnels, using Greek fire and siege engines, and even climbing up a toilet chute.



Images: Alamy, FreeVectorMaps.com



FAMOUS BATTLE

ANTIOCH 1097-98

Norman commanders largely led the epic siege in the Levant, where the First Crusade forces fought to secure the road to Jerusalem

The First Crusade was the bloody beginning of a theologically based military movement that changed the course of history and whose effects we still live with today. When European Christian warriors launched campaigns to wrest control of Jerusalem and the Holy Land from Muslim control, they had no idea they were sowing divisions that would poison East-West relations into the 21st century. That dark legacy hints at what a huge movement the Crusades were, and Norman knights spearheaded the first Crusaders into the Levant.

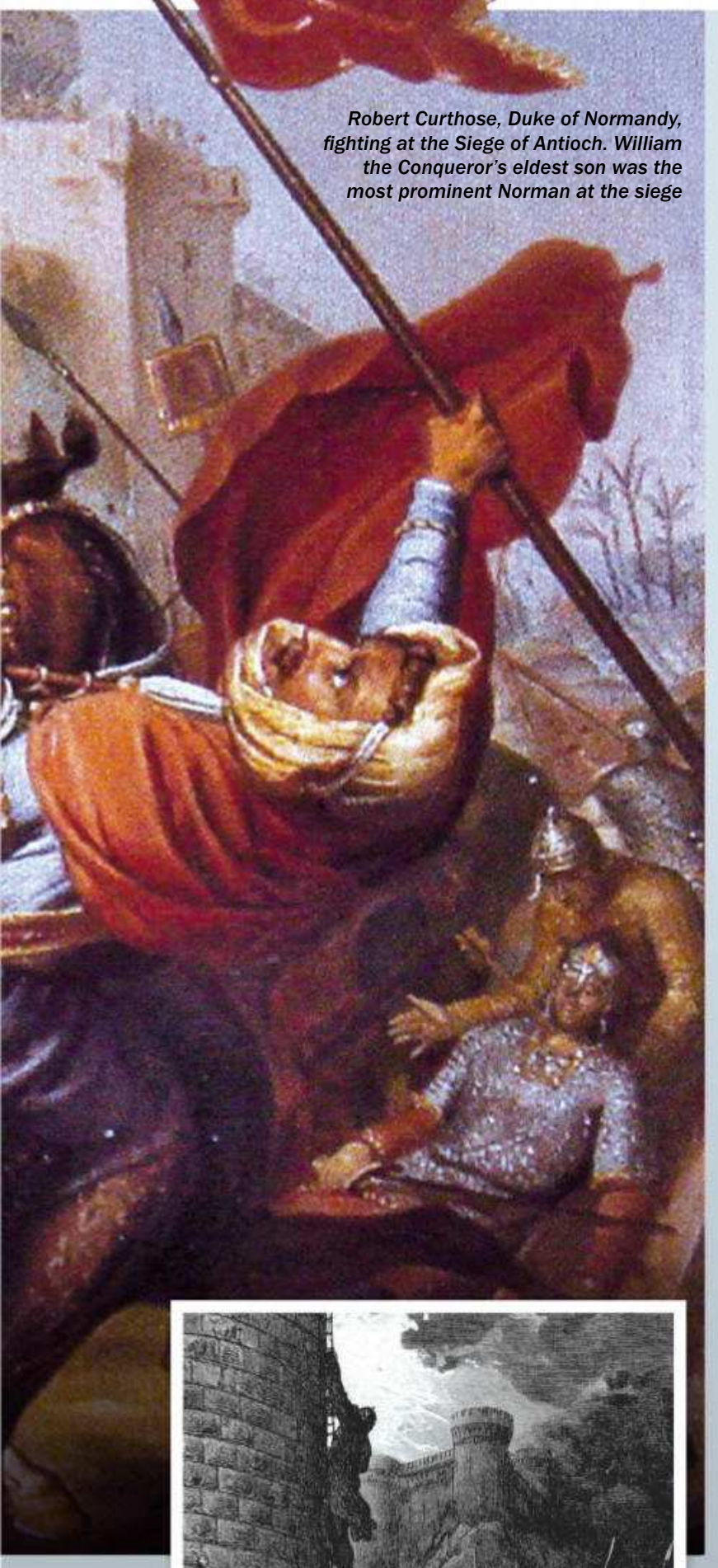
The dramatic Siege of Antioch was the decisive engagement that marked the arrival of the First Crusade in the Holy Land. In October 1097, tens of thousands of European Crusaders arrived at the gates of Antioch, which is now Antakya in Turkey. They had previously marched through enemy Seljuk lands in Anatolia and captured Edessa in Upper Mesopotamia. Antioch was the strategic nut the Crusaders had to crack if they were to proceed towards Jerusalem.

Antioch was important for Christians. The saints Peter, Paul and Barnabas had formed the first Christian community there, and the patriarch of the city rivalled both Jerusalem and Constantinople in authority. Even the word ‘Christian’ was first used in Antioch. It was also strategically important. The city controlled the route from Asia Minor into Syria and had kilometres of walls and hundreds of towers. The surrounding terrain meant that Antioch could never be fully surrounded, and it had an excellent water supply. In short, the Byzantine-built defences surrounding the city were considered impregnable, and it had only fallen to Muslim Turks in 1085 through treachery.

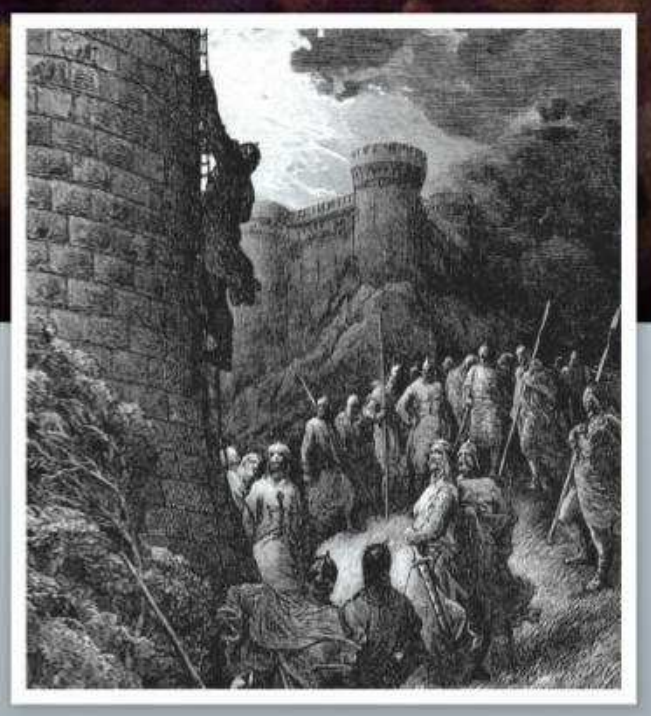
Among the besieging Crusaders were several prominent Normans: Bohemond of Taranto, Robert, Duke of Normandy and Tancred de Hauteville. Bohemond and Raymond of Toulouse each commanded a section of the blockading lines. They came under constant attack from the Turkish garrison over the next four months, and the rulers of Damascus and Aleppo also attempted to break the siege. These attacks were driven off, but over the winter of 1097-98 the besiegers ran out of food faster than the besieged, and thousands of the poorer Crusaders starved to death.

Some relief materialised when a Byzantine fleet (which was led by Edgar Ætheling, an exiled Anglo-Saxon claimant to the English throne) arrived with supplies for the Crusaders in the spring. In May, word reached the besiegers that Kerbogha, Atabeg of Mosul was marching to liberate the city. The Crusaders’ only hope was to take Antioch, but more Crusaders deserted, including Stephen of Blois, William the Conqueror’s son-in-law.

The day after Blois’s desertion, the Crusaders achieved a major breakthrough. Like the siege of 1085, Bohemond’s spies made contact with a traitor who would let them into Antioch. Firouz was an Armenian armourer who wanted revenge against his commanding officer at the Tower of

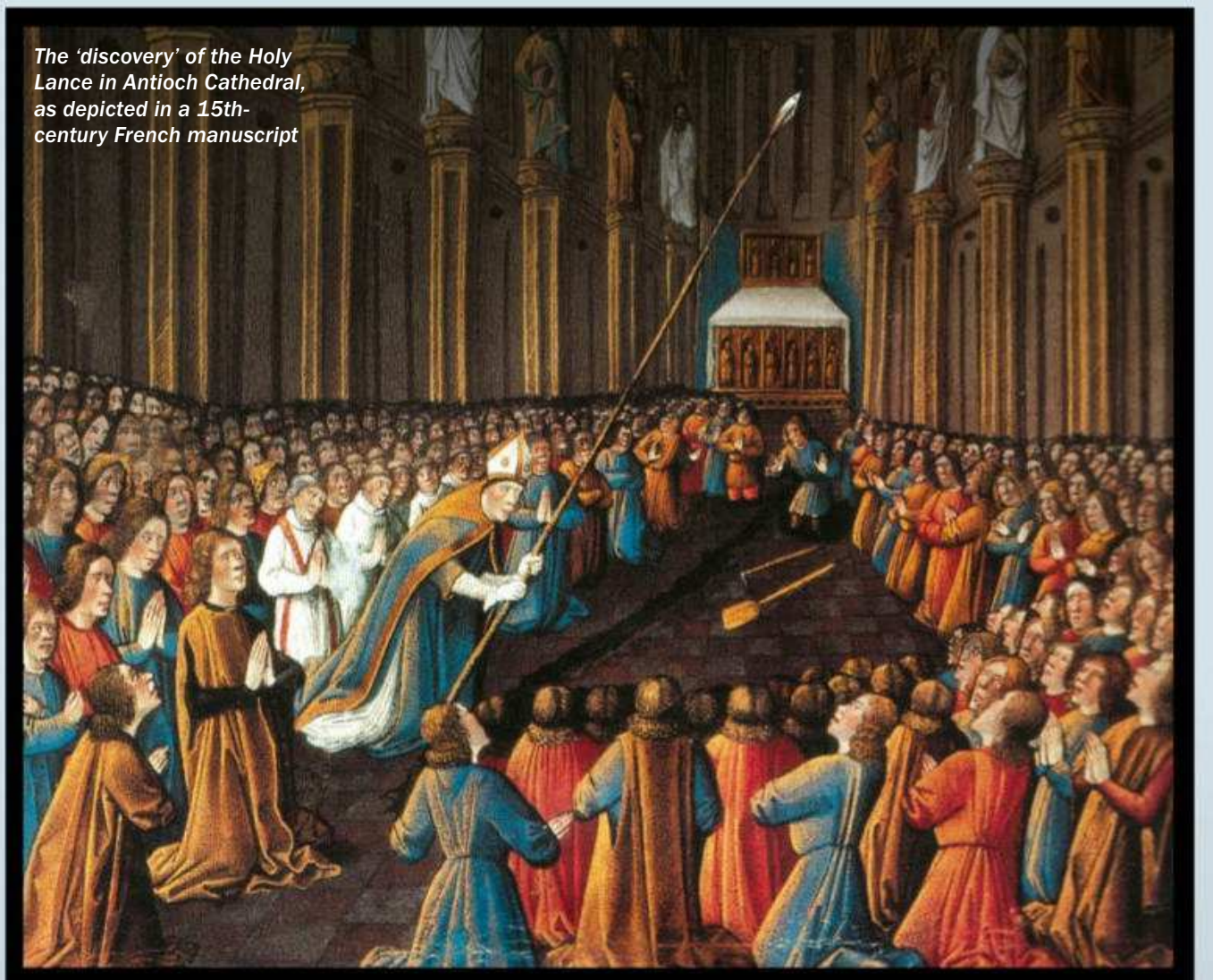


Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy, fighting at the Siege of Antioch. William the Conqueror's eldest son was the most prominent Norman at the siege



The Crusaders finally broke into Antioch when an Armenian traitor let Bohemond's men into one of the city's towers

"IN SHORT, THE CITY WAS CONSIDERED IMPREGNABLE AND IT HAD ONLY FALLEN TO MUSLIM TURKS IN 1085 THROUGH TREACHERY"



The 'discovery' of the Holy Lance in Antioch Cathedral, as depicted in a 15th-century French manuscript

THE DISCOVERY OF THE HOLY LANCE

DESPERATE CRUSADERS ALLOWED A DISREPUTABLE MYSTIC TO CONDUCT AN EXCAVATION, AND HE UNCOVERED A DUBIOUS CHRISTIAN RELIC

One of the most famous turning points of the siege was the supposed miracle of the discovery of the Holy Lance within the city. The lance was reputedly the weapon that was used to pierce the side of Jesus Christ as he hung on the cross during his crucifixion.

On 10 June 1098, a shabby French peasant called Peter Bartholomew claimed that he'd had a vision of Saint Andrew, who revealed that the lance was buried in Antioch's cathedral. Raymond of Toulouse and the bishop of Le Puy ordered an excavation of the cathedral on 14 June, but nothing was found until Bartholomew leapt into the dug pit and triumphantly pulled out a rod of iron. This was claimed to be the Holy Lance, and when the Crusaders marched out to face Kerbogha's army they carried the relic with them.

Many Crusaders attributed their victory to the Holy Lance, and it became a symbol of what they considered to be a sign that God was with them. However, not all were convinced that the Holy Lance was genuine, especially considering Bartholomew's reputation for drinking and womanising. The most prominent sceptic was Bohemond, who declared, "Let Count Raymond and his foolish crowd assign the victory to the Lance." Tellingly, it was Bohemond who used the distraction of the lance and other attributed 'miracles' to quickly assert control over Antioch and claim it for himself.

the Two Sisters. He offered to let the besiegers in for money. Bohemond took this information and informed the Crusaders that he wanted to rule Antioch if the operation succeeded.

Firouz let Bohemond's Norman troops in through a window, and the Crusaders rampaged across the city, killing all in their path. But they soon discovered to their horror that there was almost no food left in Antioch. 20,000 Crusaders were now starving to death, and Kerbogha's army was coming. The besiegers had become the besieged and awaited relief from a Byzantine army led by Tatikios. Unfortunately, Tatikios encountered Stephen of Blois en route, who informed him the Crusaders had probably failed at Antioch. Tatikios turned back and the Crusaders were left to their fate.

A 'miraculous' victory

By June 1098, the Crusaders were on the cusp of destruction, but salvation was soon at hand. On 14 June, a crusading peasant called Peter Bartholomew 'discovered' the Holy Lance in Antioch Cathedral, and Crusader morale was boosted. The remnants of the army then staggered out of Antioch on 28 June to face Kerbogha's newly arrived force. They saw white-clad cavalry in the distance that they mistook for charging Christian saints. In reality, the distant soldiers were Kerbogha's disunited and deserting army, which disintegrated before the Crusaders. The Crusaders scattered the remaining Muslim cavalry. Bohemond then rushed back into the city and occupied the citadel. He declared himself prince of Antioch and a Norman-led principality was established.

The First Crusade could now continue, and Jerusalem fell in July 1099. Bohemond's Antioch became a powerful Crusader state whose Christian settlers were mostly of Norman origin. It survived for over 150 years, until 1268.

NORMAN WARRIORS

These formidable warlords included Vikings, mercenaries, kings and crusaders, who spread their influence across Europe and the Near East

WILLIAM I 1028-87

THE NORMAN 'BASTARD' WHO TURNED INTO THE 'CONQUEROR' OF ENGLAND

By far the most successful and decisive of all the Norman warriors, William transformed his position from the ruler of a provincial duchy to the monarch of one of the most sophisticated kingdoms in Europe.

Born at Falaise, he was the illegitimate son of Robert I, Duke of Normandy and his mistress Herleva. William inherited the duchy as a child. He grew up in an insecure atmosphere where several of his guardians were killed and William's own life was constantly in danger. His childhood turned him into a ruthless ruler, and in 1047 William asserted his authority by crushing rebels at the Battle of Val-ès-Dunes. After mercilessly sacking towns such as Alençon, William used the sword to strengthen his position in Normandy, before turning his eyes towards England.

Upon the death of King Edward the Confessor in 1066, William invaded England after the swift coronation of the Anglo-Saxon Harold II. He won the Battle of Hastings on 14 October 1066, in a hard contest where he had to loudly deny that he had been killed. In fact, it was Harold that died that day, and the previously mocked 'bastard' duke was now king of England.

William crushed all English opposition to his rule with frightening zeal. His soldiers destroyed vast swathes of the north of England, and around 500 castles were built across the kingdom. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* recorded that the Normans "built castles far and wide, oppressing the unhappy people".

Despite his success in England, William spent his last years fighting in Normandy against rebels that included his eldest son Robert. In 1079, Robert even unhorsed William in combat and wounded him. The king continued his suppressive wars and was mortally injured in 1087 when his horse threw him near the smouldering ruins of Mantes, a town he had just sacked.

"WILLIAM CRUSHED ALL ENGLISH OPPOSITION TO HIS RULE WITH FRIGHTENING ZEAL"

***Left:** William's physical strength was such that it was said he could jump onto a horse wearing full armour without effort*

***Below:** William is depicted lifting his helmet during the Battle of Hastings in the Bayeux Tapestry. This is the only contemporary likeness of him*

ROLLO 860-930

THE VIKING FOUNDER OF THE DUCHY OF NORMANDY

Rollo's origins are uncertain, and he has variously been described as a Dane or Norwegian. This Scandinavian warrior was a pirate who raided England, Scotland and Flanders before attacking France with a Danish army. Rollo established himself in the vicinity of the Seine River and besieged Paris. The king of the West Franks, Charles III (otherwise known as 'the Simple') was able to prevent Rollo from taking Paris but eventually went into negotiations with him.

By the terms of the Treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte in 911, Charles allowed Rollo and his followers to settle in a part of Neustria, which formed part of his western kingdom. In exchange, Rollo agreed to end his raiding and acknowledged Charles as his lord. The land that Rollo's Vikings settled on became known as 'Normandy', in reference to its population of 'Northmen'.

Rollo ruled Normandy but he never became duke and was instead known as the count of Rouen. His Viking descendents later became dukes of Normandy and kings of England.

A 19th-century statue of Rollo in Rouen. His Viking followers settled in Normandy but quickly adopted the French language, customs and Christian religion

Left: At various times in his life Guiscard held the titles of count and duke of Apulia and Calabria, duke of Sicily and even the prince of Benevento

ROBERT GUISCARD DE HAUTEVILLE 1015-85

THE NORMAN SCOURGE OF THE POPE AND BYZANTINE EMPIRE

Born in Normandy, Guiscard travelled to southern Italy, where his older brothers had carved out successful careers as mercenaries and established themselves as powerful warlords. Because of his early reputation as a brigand, he was nicknamed 'Guiscard', which meant 'Crafty One'.

Guiscard helped win a notable victory against a papal army at the Battle of Civitate in 1053 and assisted in conquering the remaining Byzantine lands in Italy. He became an ally of the pope and was instrumental in securing the Norman conquest of Sicily in 1072. From 1080, Guiscard began to attack the Byzantine Empire itself and crossed the Aegean Sea with a huge fleet. He defeated Emperor Alexios I Komnenos at the Battle of Dyrrhachium and then returned to Italy. Guiscard sacked Rome and rescued Pope Gregory VII before installing him in a palace at Salerno.

Guiscard's astonishing career ended when he captured Corfu in 1085. While wintering in Greece, an epidemic spread through the Norman army that killed many, including Guiscard.

BOHEMOND I 1054-1111

THE CRUSADING FOUNDER OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF ANTIOCH

'Bohemond' was a nickname that described the crusader's tall height and knightly strength. He was described by a contemporary as a "wonderful spectacle"

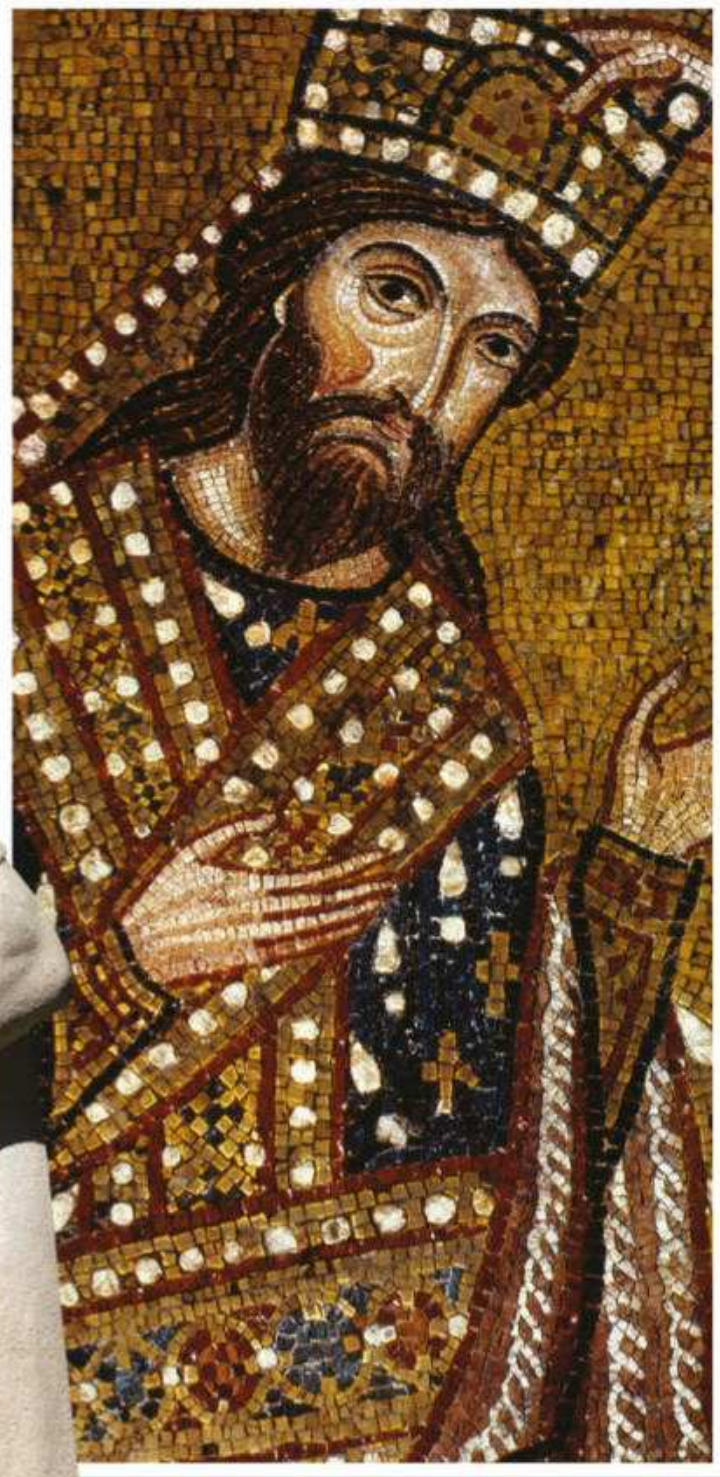
The eldest son of Robert Guiscard, Bohemond learned the art of war from his father and fought against the Byzantine emperor Alexios I Komnenos, notably at the Siege of Durazzo. Bohemond's victories against the Byzantines resulted in the capture of most of Macedonia and Thessaly, but he had to return to Italy for financial reasons.

When the First Crusade was declared in 1095 Bohemond led a small force of Normans across Greece and Anatolia, before assuming command of the Crusaders at the Siege of Antioch. He was instrumental in the city's fall in June 1098 and took control of its governance. Bohemond was captured by Muslims in 1100 and imprisoned in chains until 1103.

In 1106, Bohemond married the daughter of the king of France but lost a war against the Byzantines. He was forced to accept being a vassal of the Byzantine emperor, but he retained control of Antioch until his death. The Norman-established principality of Antioch would survive until 1268.

ROGER II 1095-1154

THE FIRST NORMAN MONARCH OF A UNIFIED KINGDOM OF SICILY



The son of Roger I, Count of Sicily, at Mileto, the young Roger was taught by Greek and Arab tutors and could speak several languages. Knighted in 1112 in the Palazzo dei Normanni (Palace of the Normans) at Palermo, Roger administered his Sicilian territories and became known for his diplomatic skills. After supporting Antipope Anacletus II against Pope Innocent II, Roger was crowned king of Sicily in December 1130. After defeating Pope Innocent in battle, Roger forced the pope to recognise his kingdom, but was defeated twice at the battles of Nocera and Rignano.

Nevertheless, Roger was able to consolidate his power and created a navy that briefly captured much of Tunisia and sailed up the Bosporus to attack Constantinople. He also presided over an intellectual court that administered tolerance over the various peoples and religions of Sicily.

This Norman king was the first to engender a sense of unified Sicilian identity among the islanders.

Left: Roger II's Sicilian court reflected the multicultural life of Sicily, which was ruled by Normans but influenced by Latin, Byzantine Greek and Arab cultures

RICHARD DE CLARE, 2ND EARL OF PEMBROKE 1130-76

THE INVADER OF IRELAND WHO WAS POPULARLY KNOWN AS 'STRONGBOW'

Born in England, Richard de Clare inherited his father's southern Welsh estates as the earl of Pembroke. In 1168, Pembroke agreed to aid the exiled King Diarmait Mac Murchada of Leinster to retake his Irish kingdom.

Diarmait returned to Leinster with his Norman allies in 1169, with Pembroke arriving the following year. This invasion was authorised by Pope Adrian IV and backed by Henry II of England. Pembroke captured Waterford, married Diarmait's daughter Aoife and secured the succession of the kingdom of Wexford for himself. He was besieged by the king of Connacht at Dublin but managed to rout the besiegers in battle. His nickname 'Strongbow' was probably a mistranslation of his lesser Welsh earldom of Striguil.

Henry II arrived in Ireland himself in 1171 and forced Pembroke to acknowledge his royal authority. After helping Henry suppress a rebellion in Normandy, Pembroke was granted Wexford, Waterford and Dublin. At his death, Pembroke was the recognised ruler of Leinster, and Anglo-Norman influence in Ireland was permanently entrenched.

Pembroke's alleged effigy in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin. The popular English cider brand 'Strongbow' is named after him

Images: Alamy

KNIGHTS, ARCHERS & WEAPONS

Norman warriors were well equipped and successfully utilised horses and projectile missiles to achieve military success

The Norman approach to warfare was tough, disciplined and required years of training. Although they were not invincible, the armies that sprang from Normandy and conquered many parts of Europe were extremel formidable. Historians know a surprising amount about the Normans' military techniques from rich contemporary documents. The best pictorial evidence of their arms and armour comes from the Bayeux Tapestry, which was completed in the 1080s. 201 armed soldiers are depicted, 79 of which are wearing some kind of armour. This shows that the Normans were not just a people but also a military machine.

ARCHERS

NORMAN BOWMEN WERE NUMEROUS AND COULD DECISIVELY INFLUENCE THE COURSE OF BATTLES

Although they were not as famous as their mounted counterparts, archers were an important part of Norman battlefield success. Because of their need for quick movement, archers were lightly clothed, to the point of being barefoot or barelegged. They would carry arrows in quivers, either on their belts or placed on the ground. Early crossbows were also used and were capable of penetrating through shields.

William the Conqueror's army at the Battle of Hastings contained approximately 1,000 archers. Their deadliness was proved when William ordered them to loose arrows onto the Anglo-Saxons' heads over their shield wall.

Archers at the Battle of Hastings are predominantly depicted without armour and carrying quivers. The armoured bowman is seen clutching several arrows in his left hand

Below: This flexible armour was the principle defensive protection for Norman knights

CHAIN MAIL

The hauberk was a knee-length mail shirt of interlocking metal that was both strong and allowed a warrior complete freedom of movement. The mail was worn over clothing and was heavy to wear, even for experienced soldiers. Normans would only wear their armour when absolutely necessary and did not wear it while marching, unless there was a danger of being ambushed.

Image: Mary Evans

"HORSES WERE ALSO TRAINED TO FIGHT FOR THEMSELVES, EITHER BY BITING OPPONENTS OR KICKING"

LANCE

Lances had a leaf-shaped head of iron and a wooden haft. It was usually held over-arm at arm's length, although it could be couched to give the weapon greater rigidity and force. In this latter position a knight could cross his lance over his horse's neck for extra balance. The Bayeux Tapestry also implies they were thrown as spears, with ammunition wagons replacing the used lances.

KNIGHTS

THESE DISCIPLINED HORSEMEN WERE THE MOST FEARSOME WARRIORS IN NORMAN ARMIES

Mounted knights were the key component of any Norman army. Powerful lords who owed allegiance to the duke ruled Normandy. If he required experienced soldiers, the lords would provide mounted warriors, who were subsidised by the local community. These formidable cavalrymen (who were better known as 'knights') were trained from a young age to fight in groups of five or ten, which were known as 'conroys'. The conroys could carry out complex manoeuvres and remained concentrated around a standard known as a 'gonfanon'. Their warhorses, which were often stallions, were known as 'destriers' and were specifically bred to carry armoured men. The horses were also trained to fight for themselves, either by biting opponents or kicking with their hooves.

Knights used shock tactics, such as direct charges, or they would throw javelins from a short distance before quickly retiring from pursuing opponents. Their enemies usually fought on foot, so Norman knights had a distinct advantage fighting on horseback. They were also renowned for their discipline and were fanatically loyal to each other. It was very common for mounted Normans to stick together, even through difficult manoeuvres such as feints or organised retreats, and it was this tight coordination that regularly turned battles in their favour.

This scene from the Bayeux Tapestry shows a typical Norman 'conroy' in action. Knights were aided by using stirrups, which kept them steady on horseback

BOW

Norman bows were probably shorter than the famous 1.83-metre (six-foot) longbow of the later Middle Ages, and would have been drawn to the body rather than the ear. Evidence from the Bayeux Tapestry indicates that bows were occasionally used by mounted troops to pursue a fleeing enemy.

HELMET

The Normans' famous steel, often conical, headpieces were characterised by a distinctive nose guard. They were either made in one piece or from several segments that were riveted together. Helmets were firmly held in place by laces strapped under the chin. Although they were generally simple in appearance, kings and princes often set helmets with jewels above the nose, including decorated brow bands.

***Above:** Although this 11th-century helmet comes from Moravia, it would have been very similar in appearance to many Norman headpieces*

HARRYING ENGLAND

1066 unleashed a horrendous Norman occupation upon the English, who endured decades of armed repression and civil wars

For the English, the Norman conquest of 1066 was a catastrophe. Anglo-Saxon England had already suffered brutal invasions and occupations by Vikings for centuries, but the Normans were different. While their Norse ancestors had only temporarily ruled at various times in England, the Normans were more organised and combined martial prowess with a military occupation that was brutally enforced.

The Harrying of the North

Although Wales, Scotland and Ireland later felt the wrath of the Normans to different degrees, England was the most direct victim of their oppression. William the Conqueror was crowned king but the English resisted his rule. In the late 1060s William consolidated his conquest by building castles in major towns, but rebellions broke out across England, which had to be continually put down. In 1069 his authority did not extend beyond York, and in that year a Norman expeditionary force had been destroyed at Durham.

A Danish invasion fleet also arrived on the Humber River and allied with the Northumbrians. They refused to fight William in battle when he marched on York, and the king managed to bribe the Danes to leave. With only the Northumbrians to defeat, William divided his army into raiding parties and committed a scorched-earth campaign. This ruthless strategy's aim was to force the northern English into submitting to Norman rule. The results were cataclysmic.

Known as the 'Harrying of the North', William's troops moved across 160 kilometres (100 miles) of territory to the Tyne River between 1069-70 and burned and destroyed all in their path. Later chroniclers wrote that local people were reduced to cannibalism and tens of thousands died of famine. England's population was only 2 million people at that time so the loss of life would have been apocalyptic. It was written that no village between York and Durham remained inhabited and the countryside was uncultivated for years. Some sense of the devastation can be gleaned from William's famous statistical survey of England, which became known as the 'Domesday Book'. Although it was compiled years later, in 1086, one-third of the land in Yorkshire was still recorded as "waste".

The Harrying of the North was successful in purely military terms and all England submitted to the Normans, but it was only the beginning of their violent impact on the kingdom.

The Anarchy

After William's brutal subjugation, the English were politically and economically displaced, and the Normans ruled England with an iron fist. Decades later, William's grandchildren Matilda and Stephen fought a vicious civil war for the crown and destabilised the kingdom between 1135-53. The English were mere pawns in this chaotic power struggle between the Normans, and the period became known as 'The Anarchy'.

England became militarised with many new fortifications, and a network of castles was constructed. Even villages and churches were fortified, including Hereford Cathedral, which had catapults placed on its tower. Like the previous 'Harrying', many areas of the kingdom were devastated. Landowners were forced to bury hoards of coins from looters, and strategic areas such as the Isle of Ely suffered multiple sieges. Such was the scale of the Anarchy that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* famously recorded, "Men said openly that Christ and his saints were asleep."

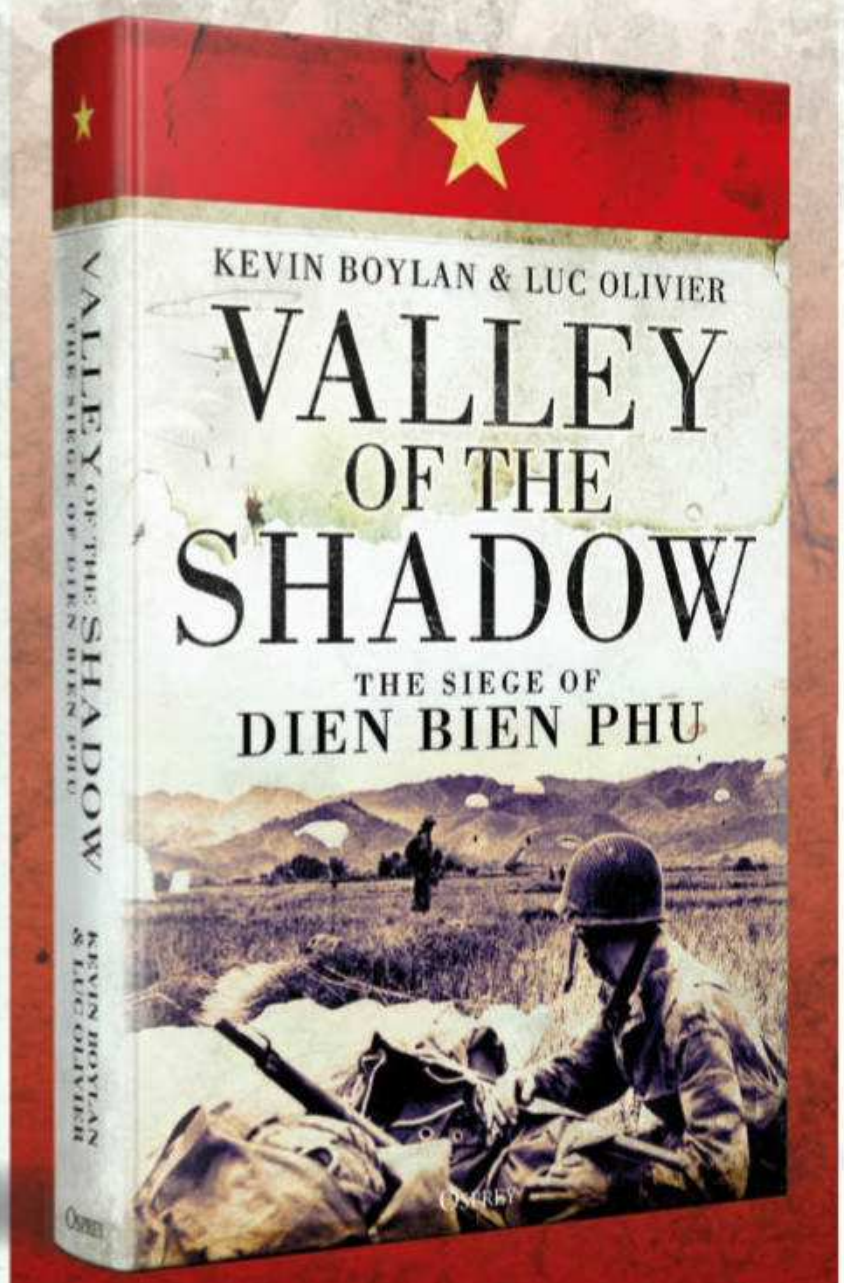
The conflict was only resolved when King Stephen agreed to allow Matilda's son Henry Plantagenet to become king after his death. The agreement ended the direct rule of the Norman dynasty, and when Stephen was succeeded by Henry II in 1154 one of his first acts was to demilitarise the English countryside and demolish the castles that had been built during the Anarchy.

This period was a sorry end to Norman rule in England. Although the Plantagenets were themselves of direct Norman descent through Matilda, their vast French and English territories ensured that Norman influence became diluted into 'Angevin' or 'Anglo-Norman' government. It was through this indirect dynastic change that the English subtly exacted revenge against their oppressors. A key part of the occupation was the linguistic introduction of Norman French among the echelons of power to separate the rulers from the conquered English. However, once Normandy was lost to the French in 1204, the Normans in England were forced to assimilate into local society and the Anglo-Saxon language prevailed. English is a now a global lingua franca and a living testament to the passive resistance of the conquered Anglo-Saxons against the Normans.

"CHRONICLERS WROTE THAT LOCAL PEOPLE WERE REDUCED TO CANNIBALISM AND TENS OF THOUSANDS DIED OF FAMINE"

image: Alamy

Pevensey Castle was the first Norman fortification in England, and the subsequent military occupation would be dominated by castle-building



VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

Struggling to reassert control over their Indochinese colonies after World War II, the French established a huge air-land base in the valley of Dien Bien Phu. But when the opposing Vietnamese People's Army (VPA) began massing its forces against the base in late 1953, French commanders seized the opportunity to draw their elusive enemy into a decisive set-piece battle.

Defending a series of fortified positions which were reliant upon a single airstrip – and later, risky and inaccurate airdrops – for reinforcement and resupply, the French troops quickly discovered that they had underestimated their enemy. In 56 days of costly close-quarters fighting, the VPA slowly dislodged the French from one strongpoint after another by developing novel tactics and accomplishing incredible feats of engineering.

Drawing upon Vietnamese-language sources never previously employed in Western accounts of the siege, *Valley of the Shadow* is a dramatic re-telling of the climactic battle of the First Indochina War, the conflict that saw the French expelled from their former colony and set the stage for the "American War" in Vietnam.

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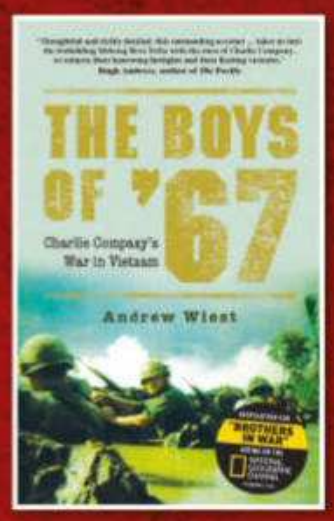

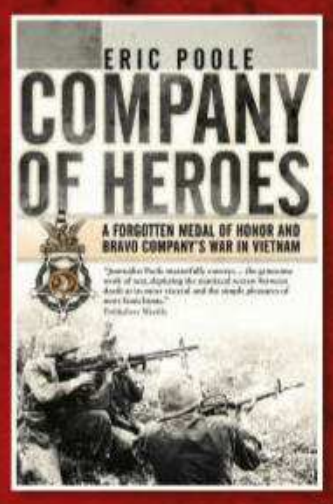

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THE IMPERIAL GUARD

NAPOLEON'S ELITE

Famous for its late attempt to salvage victory at the Battle of Waterloo, was the Old Guard such a crucial element of Napoleon's army?

The Prussian attack on Plancenoit, by Ludwig Elsholtz. Bodies of guardsmen can be seen in the foreground

Illustration: Rocío Espín

Illustration of a man of the Old Guard based on primary sources and uniforms kept at the Musée de l'Armée at the Invalides. The bearskin cap, the blue uniform, the white vest and the breeches, as well as the moustache, formed a recognisable ensemble on the battlefield

WORDS **DR BERNARD & RENÉ WILKIN**

On the morning of 18 June 1815, Napoleon realised that Wellington was holding his ground and was ready to give battle. Delighted to be given the opportunity to strike a fatal blow, the French emperor said to General Foy, "I will launch my cavalry and will send my Old Guard forward."

As always when positioning his forces, Napoleon ordered the Imperial Guard to remain in reserve. Before 4pm, Marshal Ney, who had been tasked with the capture of La Haye Sainte, mistook movements in British positions for the beginning of a retreat. Eager to exploit the situation, he ordered a cavalry charge to break Wellington's centre. Despite its orders to stay put, the light cavalry of the Old Guard followed the charge.

Captain de Brach, a lancer of the Guard, later explained this controversial move: "Four horse regiments of the Guard, a division under Ney's orders, did not split for the whole day and stayed close to the Nivelles road. They did not move until the assault… Four regiments were positioned on a single line, near the main road, the lancers on the right, and to their left the chasseurs, the dragoons and the grenadiers… The brigade of dragoons and grenadiers, waiting for an order, suddenly believed that they had been ordered to charge; we followed!" At 5pm, Napoleon sent the heavy cavalry of the Guard and squadrons led by Lefebvre-Desnouettes to support the effort. The French cavalry attack crashed on British infantry squares, causing little damage to them.

By 6pm, Napoleon had good reason to be worried. The French had been fighting the Battle of Waterloo for more than six hours against the armies of Wellington. Bülow's IV Corps had arrived at 4.30pm near Plancenoit, not far from the rear of the French positions. The Duhesme Division of the Young Guard (3,000 men) had been dispatched to face the Prussians.

As Colonel Pontécoulant explained, the struggle was doomed from the beginning. The Young Guard was composed of "fresh soldiers who were supposed to swell the ranks of the Imperial Guard but had nothing in common with it, except for the name, and had neither its courage or devotion." When the Young Guard was driven out of Plancenoit, Napoleon ordered the deployment of the 2nd Battalion of the 2nd Grenadiers and the 1st Battalion of the 2nd Chasseurs of the Old Guard. General Pelet and 1,110 French soldiers were ordered by the emperor to advance with levelled bayonets. The Prussians, used to seeing the Imperial Guard involved in mass assaults, panicked and abandoned the village.

Von Bülow, determined to recapture the village, sent the divisions of Hiller, Ryssel and Tippelskirch – a total of 27 battalions supported by artillery fire. The two Old Guard battalions, as well as 2,000 soldiers of the Young Guard, resisted until nightfall. At 9pm, the church and the cemetery were finally captured by the Prussian army. General Pelet and a handful of soldiers of the Old Guard managed to withdraw, before joining other retreating soldiers.

The heroic defence of Plancenoit gave Napoleon enough time to carry on the fight against the armies of Wellington. At around 7.30pm he launched infantry units of the Imperial Guard against Wellington's centre. The During Battalion was left near the Caillou farm to protect the French headquarters, while the 1st Grenadiers was positioned not far from the Maison du Roi farm as a last reserve. While advancing, Napoleon ordered another three battalions of the 1st and 2nd Chasseurs and a battalion of the 2nd Grenadiers to remain in reserve. Therefore, no battalion of the Old Guard participated in the famous assault.

It seems that six battalions of the Middle Guard (about 3,000 men), supported by two batteries of Imperial Guard horse artillery, went forward while playing the *Marche des bonnets à poils* (the march of the bearskin hats). The Guards' advance threatened the allied centre but was ultimately stopped. Indeed, the French, outnumbered and exposed to deadly fire, faltered and broke. For the first time, the elite of Napoleon's army had failed to turn the tide. Panic spread, and soon French soldiers screamed "La garde recule" (the Guard retreats).

During the following debacle, battalions of the Old Guard were able to withdraw in good order before forming a square to fight the ultimate combats of the day. After 15 years of distinguished existence, this group of elite soldiers had ceased to exist.

Creation and organisation

After orchestrating a coup in November 1799 (coup of 18 Brumaire) and becoming first consul of France, Napoleon Bonaparte wanted a formation for his own protection. The former Guard of the Directory (garde du directoire) became the core of the new Consular Guard (garde des consuls).

The grenadiers of the Guards of the Directory had just played an important part in the coup of 18 Brumaire, having rescued Napoleon when he was being physically threatened by the Council of Five Hundred. At the beginning of 1800, the Consular Guard was made of two battalions of foot grenadiers, a company of light infantry, two squadrons of horse grenadiers, a company of chasseurs (light cavalry regiment) and a detachment of artillery – 2,089 men in total. Joachim Murat, Napoleon's brother-in-law, became the first commander of the Guard (21 October 1799 to 16 April 1800) before being succeeded by his friend Jean Lannes.

The unit received its baptism by fire at the Battle of Marengo (14 June 1800) against Austria. The official French account of the battle portrayed the Guard as a key unit: "They were positioned in the middle of the battlefield, a rock in this gigantic field. Nobody was able to hurt them, cavalry, infantry, artillery, everybody was taking shots at this battalion, in vain." The Austrians, however, offered a rather different picture of the Guard's actions at Marengo: "The Guard was broken, routed. Its soldiers were almost all killed or taken and its cannons were captured." The Austrian account was exaggerated, but the Consular Guard did lose 50 per cent of its men on the battlefield, while the Horse Guard, composed of 245 grenadiers and 185 chasseurs, lost 30 per cent of its soldiers. Three men of the Guard were noticed for their bravery: Leroy, Lanceleur and Milet. Each had captured a flag and a handful of enemy soldiers.

Back in Paris, Napoleon, realising that giving the leadership of the Guard to another man was a threat to his authority, seized its command. Jean Lannes was displeased by this decision, but was dismissed and dispatched to Portugal to act as ambassador. In August 1802 Napoleon changed the constitution to make the consulate permanent. Essentially, he had become a king without a crown.

New units were incorporated into the Consular Guard. The infantry was reinforced by a regiment of foot grenadiers and a regiment of foot chasseurs (all veterans). The cavalry saw the arrival of a regiment of horse grenadiers, a regiment of horse chasseurs – including the famous Mamelukes – a squadron of horse artillery, the Legion of Elite Gendarmerie, a battalion of Sailors of the Guard and four companies of train d'artillerie. There was also a guard hospital. In total, the Consular Guard was made up of 9,798 men.

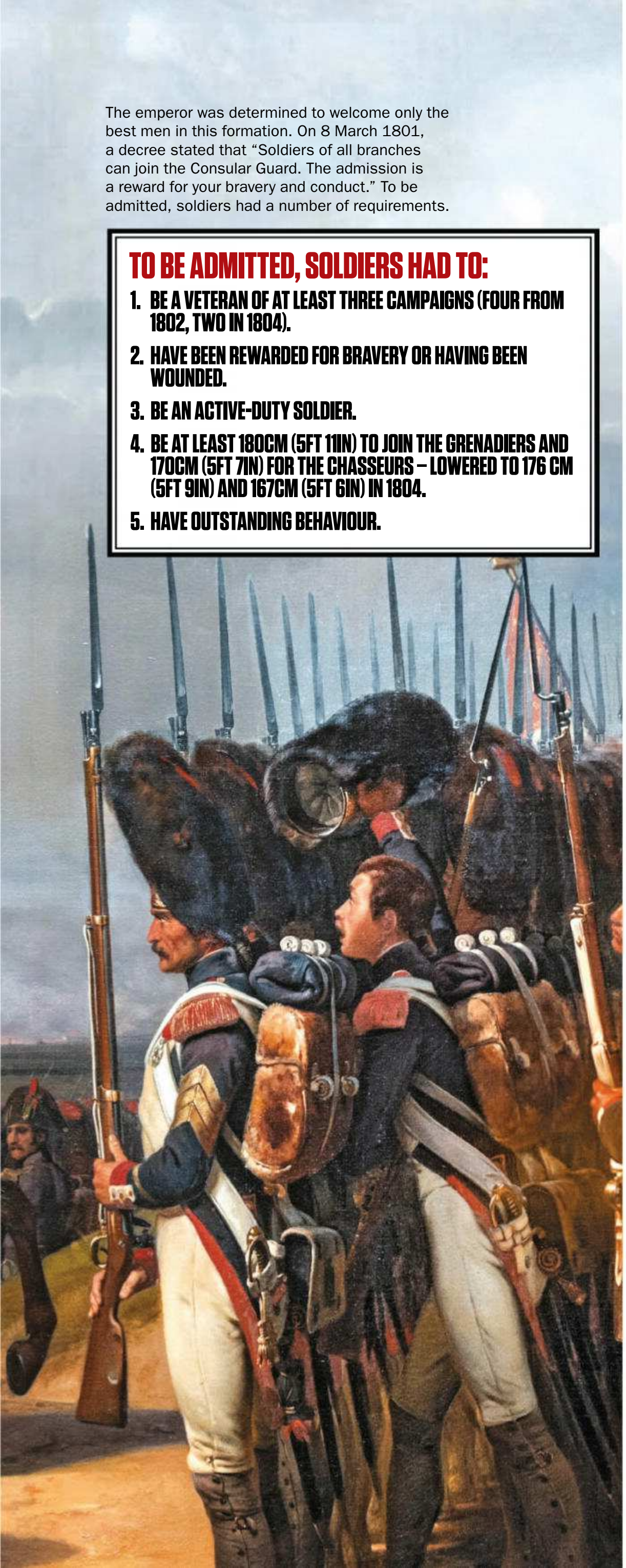
On 10 May 1804 a proclamation transformed the Consular Guard into the Imperial Guard: "The guard has been notified that the Senate proclaimed today Napoleon Bonaparte emperor of the French and made his power hereditary. Vive l'empereur! Unlimited devotion and fidelity to Napoleon, first emperor of the French. Today, the guard takes the title of Imperial Guard…"

Napoleon reviewing the Old Guard at the Battle of Jena on 14 October 1806, by Horace Vernet

The emperor was determined to welcome only the best men in this formation. On 8 March 1801, a decree stated that "Soldiers of all branches can join the Consular Guard. The admission is a reward for your bravery and conduct." To be admitted, soldiers had a number of requirements.

TO BE ADMITTED, SOLDIERS HAD TO:

1. BE A VETERAN OF AT LEAST THREE CAMPAIGNS (FOUR FROM 1802, TWO IN 1804).
2. HAVE BEEN REWARDED FOR BRAVERY OR HAVING BEEN WOUNDED.
3. BE AN ACTIVE-DUTY SOLDIER.
4. BE AT LEAST 180CM (5FT 11IN) TO JOIN THE GRENADIERS AND 170CM (5FT 7IN) FOR THE CHASSEURS – LOWERED TO 176 CM (5FT 9IN) AND 167CM (5FT 6IN) IN 1804.
5. HAVE OUTSTANDING BEHAVIOUR.



Portrait of Jacques de Trobriant, commander of the chasseurs of the Young Guard

THE YOUNG & THE MIDDLE

THE IMPERIAL GUARD WAS NOT ONLY COMPRISED OF THE FAMOUS OLD GUARD, BUT INCLUDED OTHER UNITS THAT FOUGHT VALIANTLY FOR THEIR EMPEROR

If the Old Guard is still famous today, it should not be forgotten that the Imperial Guard was also made of several other units. Two are often neglected by the historiography. The Middle Guard was created in 1806 to welcome the vélites and was composed of grenadiers and chasseurs, all veterans of the 1805 to 1809 campaigns. Used on several occasions, it was eventually merged with the Old Guard but was still referred to by many soldiers by its former name.

The Young Guard was the name given to the units of the Imperial Guard created after 1812. It was supposed to train junior cadres before they could be integrated into the Old Guard or the line as officers. It included both infantry and cavalry regiments (such as the chasseurs of the Young Guard).

The Young Guard was systematically employed on the battlefield, leading to high casualty rates, but its value varied greatly. After the disastrous Russian campaign of 1812, volunteers and conscripts were taken directly into the Young Guard with minimal entry requirements to minimise the desertion problem. The resulting lack of experience resulted in varying degrees of skill and motivation, but there is no doubt that the Young Guard fought bravely in 1814 and during the Hundred Days.

"THE YOUNG GUARD WAS SYSTEMATICALLY EMPLOYED ON THE BATTLEFIELD, LEADING TO HIGH CASUALTY RATES"

Admission to the Guard was usually preceded by a recommendation from the colonel of the regiment to which the candidate belonged.

In 1806 the above-mentioned regiments became the Old Guard. Its soldiers were not necessarily aged, but the emperor had decided to form new regiments with less strict requirements. A few soldiers of the formed Consular Guard had plenty of experience. The first man listed in the regiment's register was born in 1751 and served until 1 January 1814. The oldest was born in 1738 but was awarded a pension the same year the Guard was formed.

The composition of the Guard changed constantly. New units were created: the Empress' Dragoons, the Polish Lancers, etc. Progressively, the Middle Guard merged with the Old Guard. Five battalions of vélites were also built around young volunteers, all from wealthy families, wishing to become officers. Salary and equipment were paid for by the family. In 1806, Napoleon also created a new corps of cavalry soldiers recruited from among noble families. The payment of 1,900 francs and a pension were the only conditions to join. The army, reacting strongly against this reminiscence of the Bourbon army, forced Napoleon to dismiss this unit.

Soldiers of the Old Guard were better treated than line infantry regiments. Their salary was much higher: a grenadier earned 1.17 francs per day, while a regular soldier received 0.30. A corporal was paid 1.67 francs in the Old Guard, and 0.45 francs in the line. The officers were also much better treated.

Moreover, the Old Guard occasionally received bonuses and rewards. Guard barracks were far more comfortable and the Imperial Guard was always first to choose where to stay when at war. The hospital of the Guard was particularly good, and was managed by the best doctors, and likewise uniforms were tailored by the most talented men. Line infantry soldiers were supposed to keep their uniforms for two years, no matter what, while guardsmen had new clothes as soon as signs of wear were detected.

Soldiers of the Old Guard had even more privileges: an 1805 decree gave grenadiers and non-commissioned officers a ranking advantage. A grenadier or a chasseur of the Old Guard was supposed to be the equal of a sergeant in other units. Officers of the Old Guard also had similar advantages. An Imperial decree of 13 July 1804 stated, "Everywhere where the troops of the Imperial Guard serve with the line, they are awarded positions of honour. When together, officers and non-commissioned officers of the Imperial Guard of similar ranks are automatically made commanders. When a detachment of the Guard meets a Corps or a detachment of the line, they must be saluted… until they are gone."

As can be expected, these advantages were not to everybody's taste. An officer serving for Marshal Ney wrote in his memoirs, "The Imperial Guard has it good. It was unpleasant to be around its soldiers. Everything was done for them. Everywhere, they were given double portions." Jealousy can be found in almost all line infantry soldiers' letters and memoirs. This feeling is understandable, especially considering that the Imperial Guard lost some of its qualities over time. At first reserved for the best of the best, it became closer to a normal army corps and swelled to 100,000 men after the Russian debacle of 1812.

"AT FIRST RESERVED FOR THE BEST OF THE BEST, IT BECAME CLOSER TO A NORMAL ARMY CORPS AND SWELLED TO ABOUT 100,000 MEN AFTER THE RUSSIAN DEBACLE OF 1812"

On the battlefield

Napoleon was unwilling to use the Old Guard on the battlefield and kept it in reserve to strike at the decisive moment. Despite its reputation, the Old Guard did not see much action, however, during the 1805 campaign against Austria, the Sailors of the Guard saved a division of infantry at Krems. In the same campaign, the Guard's cavalry fought with distinction at the Battle of Austerlitz (2 December 1805). Grenadier Jean-Roch Coignet saw the action: "The emperor

Napoleon's farewell to the Old Guard, by Antoine Montfort

Above: *A quartermaster sergeant of the mounted chasseurs of the Guard*

Below: *Ducel, a member of the legendary Mamelukes of the Guard*

Above: *Dreuse, a veteran of the 2nd Light Horse Lancers, photographed in 1857*

Below: *a veteran of the Departmental Guard, photographed decades later in full uniform*

Left: *A photo from the 1850s of Grenadier Burg, one of Napoleon's veterans*

"THE GUARD DIES, IT DOES NOT SURRENDER!"

THE LEGENDARY CRY, REPORTEDLY SCREAMED BY A GENERAL OF THE OLD GUARD AT THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO, EXEMPLIFIES THE OLD GUARD'S DETERMINATION

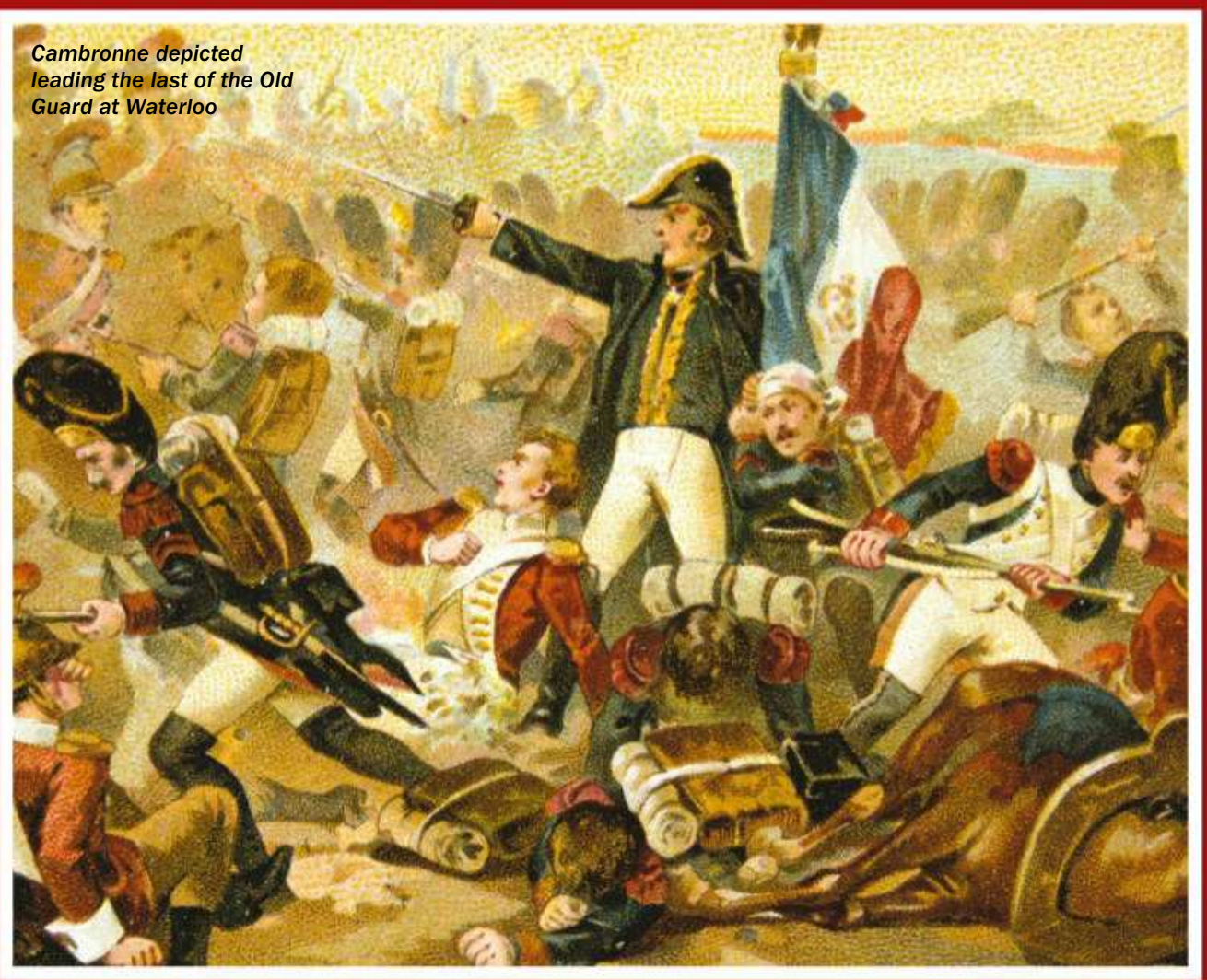
For 200 years, historians and amateurs have been debating what General Pierre Cambronne (1770-1842), who was commanding the last of the Old Guard at the Battle of Waterloo, might have replied to the British invitation to surrender. The officer had had a long career when he fought this battle.

Born on 26 December 1770, he volunteered to join the armies of the revolution in 1792. A colonel in 1806, he became the commander of the Voltigeurs of the Guard in 1810 as well as being made a baron. Cambronne then fought with the Guard in Spain, Russia and in Germany.

When Napoleon was exiled to the island of Elba, Cambronne followed as military commander. His fidelity was rewarded by the emperor, who made him a count. He was seriously wounded at the Battle of Waterloo and sent to Britain.

According to a journalist, Cambronne screamed at the British, "The Guard dies, it does not surrender!" Others, including Victor Hugo in his *Les Misérables*, argued that the gallant officer had screamed, "Merde" (shit).

In fact, Cambronne denied both. It seems that he was in no shape to say such a thing, a fact confirmed by the British colonel who captured him. Other witnesses claim that another Old Guard general, Claude-Étienne Michel (1772-1815), who led a chasseur division and was killed at Waterloo, might have said the sentence, "The Guard dies, it does not surrender!"



Cambronne depicted leading the last of the Old Guard at Waterloo

sent us forward to press the movement. We were there, 25,000 bearskin hats. The Guard and the grenadiers of Oudinot… We were walking calmly with the drums and the music. Napoleon wanted to honour the emperors commanding enemy armies by letting musicians walk with us at the centre of each battalion. Arriving at the top of the hill, we were surrounded by remnants of Corps who had been fighting since the morning.

"The Russian imperial guard was in front of us. The emperor made us stop and sent the Mamelukes and the Horse Chasseurs. These Mamelukes were formidable horsemen with their curved sabres. They could cut a head off with a single blow, or tear the back of a soldier with their sharp stirrups. One of them came back three times to give enemy flags to the emperor.

"The third time, the emperor wanted him to stay but he left

Napoleon in the uniform of a colonel of the Chasseurs à Cheval of the Old Guard

"THEY PASSED US AS THUNDER AND CHARGED THE ENEMY. FOR FIFTEEN MINUTES, IT WAS AN UNBELIEVABLE CHAOS AND IT FELT LIKE A CENTURY"

again and did not come back. He stayed on the battlefield. The chasseurs were not less worthy than the Mamelukes but they were outnumbered. The Russian imperial guard was made of gigantic and determined men. Our cavalry had to be brought back. The emperor sent the black horses, the horse grenadiers…

"They passed us as thunder and charged the enemy. For fifteen minutes, it was an unbelievable chaos and it felt like a century. We could not see anything in the smoke and the dust. We feared to see our comrades killed. The Old Guard and the grenadiers were there to give the last blow. But smoke and dust soon disappeared. The Russian imperial guard was nowhere to be seen. Our horsemen came back triumphantly and placed themselves behind the emperor."

The cavalry of the Guard was again noticed at the Battle of Eylau on 7 February 1807. At the same battle, the infantry of the Old Guard fought valiantly right under the nose of the emperor. The first regiment of the grenadiers pushed back a Russian assault that was threatening the general headquarters and Napoleon himself. General Dorsenne, seeing one of his officers ordering a volley, screamed, "Raise your weapon! The Old Guard only uses bayonets." This counter-assault was so successful that it nearly destroyed the Russian column.

In 1808, elements of the Guard fought against the Madrid revolt. Most of the Imperial Guard followed the next year when Napoleon led an expedition in the Iberian Peninsula. There, the Guard experienced its first defeat, when three squadrons of horse chasseurs and Mamelukes were ambushed by the British. General Lefebvre-Desnouettes, who led the chasseurs, was captured by the enemy. Napoleon was soon forced to abandon Spain to fight Austria. During the campaign of 1809, the Old Guard lost several men while protecting the French army after the Battle of Essling. A month later, the horse chasseurs and the Polish chevau-légers won new laurels against the Austrians. At the battle of Wagram, the Polish grabbed enemy uhlans' lances to attack further. Following this legendary action, they were transformed into light-horse lancers.

On 24 June 1812 the French army invaded Russia. The Old Guard followed the emperor but was not committed until the Battle of Borodino (7 September 1812). The battle began at 6am and lasted the whole day. The Young Guard was sent at 3pm when victory was still in the balance. Several officers asked Napoleon to send the Old Guard: "Sir, you need to involve the Guard!" screamed General Rapp while he was being taken out to be treated by a doctor. "I will most definitely not. I do not want to have it blown up. I am sure to win the battle without involving

it," answered Napoleon. By the end of the day, Napoleon had won a tactical victory but had failed to destroy the Russian army.

His refusal to commit the Old Guard saved the Russians from annihilation. A few days later, the Grande Armée took Moscow, but the destruction of the city proved disastrous for the French. For the first time in its history, the Old Guard pillaged surviving buildings with other regiments. A 29 September 1812 communiqué summarised the shame brought on the elite formation: "Acts of disorder and looting were committed yesterday and today by the Old Guard. The emperor is saddened to see that elite soldiers charged with his safety, who should behave at their best in all circumstances, commit such actions.

"Some broke the doors of the depots where flour was kept for the army. Others willingly disobeyed and mistreated guards and their commanders…" Soldiers of the Guard not only stole food but also a large amount of booty. Their lack of discipline was noticed by the rest of the army and triggered widespread hostility. After the Russian campaign, an officer wrote to the war minister, "The Guard has lost its reputation and is unanimously hated." The retreat following the destruction of Moscow was disastrous for the French army, but the Imperial Guard was the only branch to keep some cohesion. However, various combats saw the death of several men.

At the Battle of Krasnoi (15-18 November 1812), the 3rd Grenadiers began the day with 305 soldiers and officers but ended with 36 survivors. At the beginning of the campaign, 180 officers and 6,235 soldiers of the Imperial Guard had crossed the Niemen River. Months later, 177 officers and 1,312 soldiers were still alive. All cavalry units had been wiped out.

The Imperial Guard was rebuilt from scratch, but finding men was not an easy task. The letter of a soldier serving in a line infantry regiment shows that the best soldiers were invited to apply for the Imperial Guard. However, most hesitated as it was rumoured that the guardsmen were headed for Spain. During the campaign of 1813, the Old Guard was only used during the Battle of Hanau (30 October 1813). After the Battle of Leipzig, the French had retreated towards France when they were stopped by the Bavarian army, led by Marshal von Wrede. The Bavarian general wanted to block Napoleon's line of retreat. This time, Napoleon did not hesitate to commit his best men. He sent the Imperial Guard, both Young and Old Guards, to clear the enemy. The following victory was important for Napoleon, as it allowed the French to retreat and oppose the invasion of France.

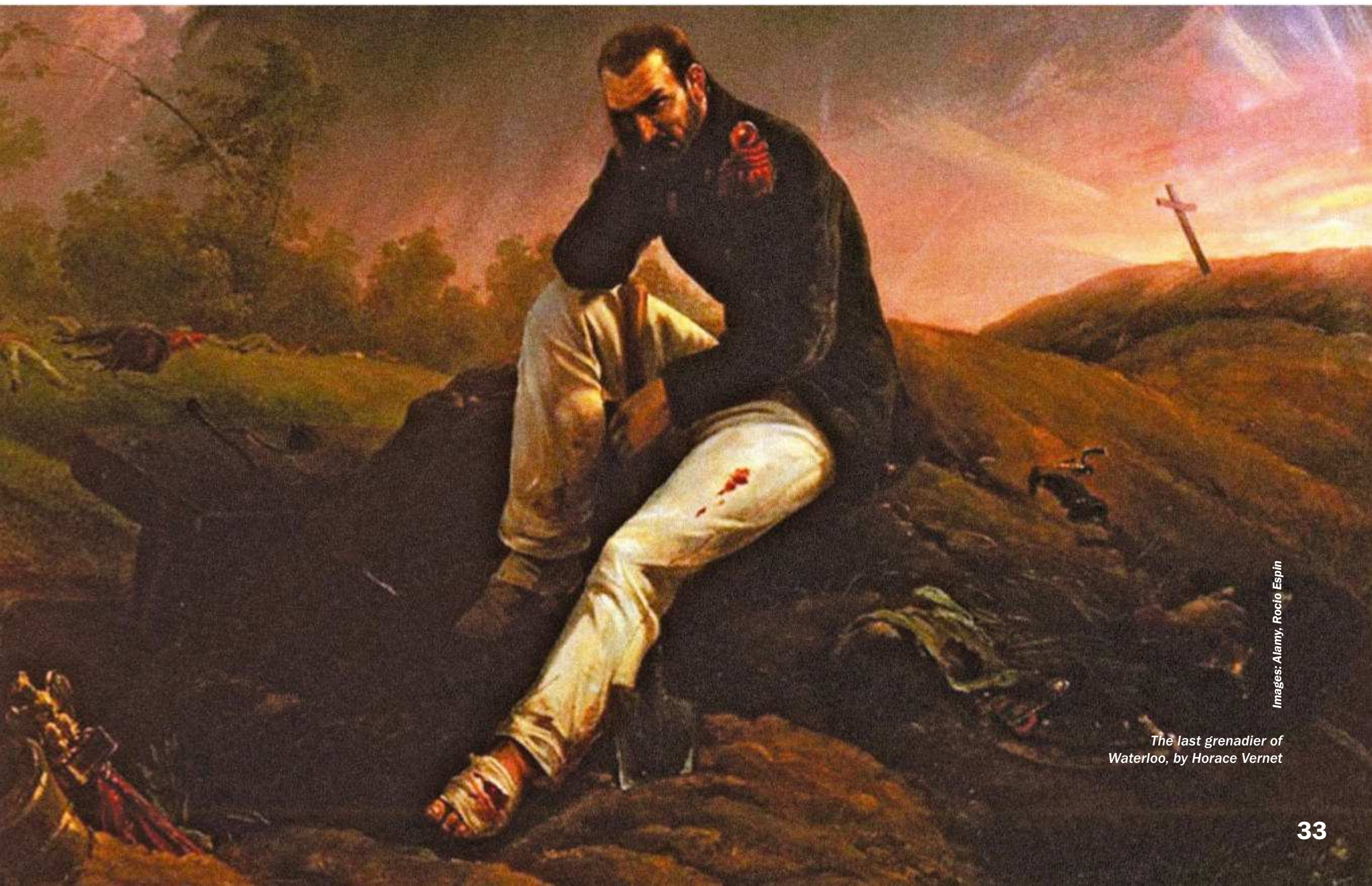
Pressed by the allies, Napoleon did not have time to bring the Old Guard back to its former glory. Nonetheless, French guardsmen distinguished themselves during the campaign of 1814. The French emperor wrote on the evening of the Battle of Montmirail that "my old foot guard and horse guard worked miracles. What they achieved can only be compared to what is found in chivalric tales." The same day, he wrote to his brother: "All of this was achieved by sending half of my Old Guard, who did more than what can be expected of men. My foot guard, dragoons, horse grenadiers, worked miracles." Despite inflicting several defeats, Napoleon was unable to stop the enemy coalition from advancing on Paris. On 4 April 1814 he abdicated in favour of his son, before being forced to sign the Treaty of Fontainebleau on 13 April. He was sent to the island of Elba with 724 soldiers of the Old Guard.

"MISSING CRUCIAL COMMANDERS, THE ELITE FORMATION WAS A SHADOW OF ITS FORMER SELF"

The remaining regiments were renamed. The Foot Grenadiers became the French Grenadiers, the Horse Grenadiers the Corps of Royal French Cuirassiers, the Chasseurs à Cheval the Corps of Royal Chasseurs, the Dragoons the Corps of Royal Dragoons of France, the 2nd Chevau-légers the Corps of Royal Chevau-légers Lancers of France.

On 1 March 1815 Napoleon landed on the French mainland. On 20 March, he arrived in Paris and immediately signed an imperial decree to re-establish the Imperial Guard. Missing crucial commanders, the elite formation was a shadow of its former self. Soon, many of its members would lose their lives in a field in Brabant.

*The authors would like to thank Arnaud Springuel and Waterloo Immersion (**www.waterlooimmersion.be**) for the help received.*



Images: Alamy, Rocio Espin

The last grenadier of Waterloo, by Horace Vernet

THE BATTLE OF JISR BENAT YAKUB

& THE END OF THE PALESTINE CAMPAIGN OF WORLD WAR I

In the summer of 1918, the Palestine campaign entered its final throes as British & Commonwealth forces pursued the retreating Ottoman army

WORDS **GILAD B. JAFFE & URI BERGER**

The battle of 'Jisr Benat Yakub' Bridge, today known as the 'Daughters of Jacob Bridge', was one of the major clashes of the Palestine campaign in 1918. The battle serves as an important link in the chain of historical events surrounding the bridge, and a vital part in the advance of the Allied forces in the Middle East during the war.

On 26 September 1918, tidings of the victory against the Ottoman forces in Galilee arrived in Jerusalem. The news spurred Mordechai Ben-Hillel, a Jewish author, to joyously write in his diary about the delight that spread through the city as word got around. The general feeling across Jerusalem was that the war was over, the Ottoman and German forces were beaten and the victory celebrations could finally begin.

The truth, of course, was different. Ben-Hillel's joy was slightly premature and the end of the war itself was still some time away. His diary entry came only one day after the end of the Battle of Megiddo, the final part of the vast campaign led by General Edmund Allenby to conquer the northern part of Palestine from the Ottoman forces, which took place on 19-25 September 1918 – although very little fighting occurred around the site of Megiddo itself.

The battle for the Daughters of Jacob Bridge on 27 September 1918 was essentially the last phase of the greater Battle of Megiddo. On 26 September Allenby ordered the forces to move northwards and continue with the plan to capture Damascus. In order to do that, the forces had to first secure the pass over the Jordan River and eventually team up with the forces of Lawrence of Arabia and conquer Damascus.

The Jordan River, flowing southward from the slopes of Mount Hermon all the way to the Dead Sea became an important strategic point during the final months of World War I. However it also held even older military significance.

Slightly south to Lake Hula, wedged in between the Golan Heights in the east and the Korazim Block in the west, is Jacob's Ford, and crossing it is the bridge then known as Jisr Benat Yakub. Various Galilean traditions and legends, some dating to the Crusader period and even earlier, tie the location of the bridge to the biblical stories of Jacob and his sons from the book of Genesis, and it is from these stories that the bridge acquired its name.

It is said that the location of the bridge is the place through which Jacob re-entered the land of Israel after the time he spent with his uncle Laban (Genesis 31). It is also, according to these traditions, the place where Jacob fought with the angel and where he received the news of the death of his son Joseph in the story of selling Joseph to the Ishmaelites. One story tells that Jacob's daughters were present when he received the news, and the tears they cried turned the white stones black.

Another tale revolves around a crusader monastery in Zefat, which garnered donations from taxes levied at the bridge, a monastery that found its end in a brutal massacre at the hands of the Mamluks during their conquest of Zefat. The name of the bridge serves as a memorial to that monastery. As is usually the case with these situations, the authenticity of the stories is up for debate, but the traditions stand to this day.

The importance of this pass is also the reason behind the many military clashes

Image: Getty

The 3rd Australian Light Horse Regiment in action against Ottoman forces, 31 December 1917

***Above:** A photo of a group of German soldiers, who were take prisoner in 1918*

***Above:** Horses were still in use in this theatre of WWI, even in 1918. Here, British Yeomen rest while on patrol*

***Above:** Both men and horses rest on the road to Jerusalem and Latron, 1918*

throughout history. The Crusaders fought the armies of Saladin more than once for control of the bridge. This campaign ended with the battle of 'Vadum Jakob', which took place in August 1179. This battle also brought with it the fall of the fortress of Chastelet, which is located to the south of the bridge, and foreshadowed the demise of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, which fell on 4 July 1187 following the Battle of the Horns of Hattin.

The bridge also served as a battlefield for the French against the Ottomans, which the French ultimately lost, and served as the northernmost point the forces of Napoleon Bonaparte reached in April 1799.

Even after World War I, this place was regarded as a point of key importance. It was blown up as part of the 'Night of the Bridges', an operation executed by the Israeli resistance movement against the British Mandate Government in Israel in 1946, and was a fierce battlefield between Israel and Syria in the Israeli independence war of 1948.

Moving towards the bridge

On the morning of 25 September 1918, General Allenby gave his British forces the order to continue their manoeuvre towards Damascus. By this point, the 7th and 8th Divisions of the Ottoman army had fallen apart. These divisions were made up of the famous Yildirim force. The word yildirim means 'lightning' in Turkish. These were new Ottoman units that were organised in a German manner, and were basically a combination of Turkish soldiers and a full German infantry division.

The remnants of these forces, together with the Fourth Ottoman Army, which had also suffered many casualties, retreated deep into Syria, making their way towards Damascus.

The task of capturing Damascus was given to the Australian Mounted Division together with the 4th and 5th Indian Cavalry Divisions. The forces were split and were to arrive at the target through different routes: the 4th Australian Light Horse (ALH), commanded by Barrow, was sent through the Hauran and Daraa, with a planned rendezvous with Feisal and Lawrence of Arabia along the way, while the two remaining divisions, commanded by Hodgson and MacAndrew, made their way to the rendezvous point through the Daughters of Jacob Bridge and the Golan Heights. All the forces were to arrive at Damascus by 29 September.

Given the planned schedule, the date for crossing the Jordan River was set for the 28th. The information supplied by T. E. Lawrence and air reconnaissance reported that some 20,000-30,000 Turkish soldiers had retreated back in the direction of Damascus, and that the Germans and Turks still held the city of Daraa. In addition, there was some doubt as to whether Lawrence's forces would be able to overcome them.

The force arriving to Damascus via the Daughters of Jacob Bridge therefore had a crucial role in the battle – it was to arrive at the bridge, conquer it, stop the retreating enemy before they joined with the forces in Damascus, and thus help ensure the speedy capture of the region's capital.

"THE CRUSADERS FOUGHT THE ARMIES OF SALADIN MORE THAN ONCE FOR CONTROL OF THE BRIDGE"

After arriving at Tiberias on 25 September and finding it empty of enemy forces, who had retreated east towards Damascus, the 9th Australian Light Horse Regiment began making its way from the settlement of Migdal, which resides on the shores of the lake, to the town of Zefat. Following a 2.5-hour ride through the Korazim ridge, which was uneventful and mostly included the soldiers sight-seeing at locations only known to them from scripture, they finally arrived at the 'Jewish Colony', as it is called in the British documentation, of Rosh Pina, which was situated by the Arab village of 'Ja Auneh'.

The force was welcomed by the Jewish settlers with enthusiasm, and due to the fact that some of the settlers spoke English and French, the soldiers were able to acquire some information from the locals. Of all the information given to the commanders of the 9th ALH by the settlers, the most important was that the Turks had retreated from the area of the Daughters of Jacob Bridge that same morning.

Shortly after their meeting with the settlers of Rosh Pina the force proceeded towards its objective, the town of Zefat. Situated on a high vantage point on the Cana'an mountain range, west of the area of the bridge and overlooking it, the Australian forces had to take control of the town before they could advance on the bridge, in order to avoid being attacked from the rear during their advance eastwards.

They climbed the steep slope up the hills from Rosh Pina towards Zefat, and as they approached the town they saw no enemy force in the vicinity, only a large white flag on top of one of the buildings. Soon after their arrival, the force was met by a group of locals, headed by one of their chiefs. He too was carrying a large white flag in his hands.

Having taken the high ground, Bleechmore, who commanded the force, and four of his men entered Zefat between two rows made up of the settlers, who cheered them as they moved along. They made their way up to the English Hospital, which had served as the Turkish governor's headquarters until 8am that same morning, and there the Australian force officially received control of the town and were asked by the settlers to protect them from raiding Arabs. In addition, they received 50 tons of grain, which belonged to the Turkish government, and 70 rifles.

Following that, the troops left Zefat. Some immediately took on the duty of protecting the townspeople from Arab raids, as promised, while another force continued on, and spread out tactically along the Tiberias-Damascus road south of Rosh Pina.

With Zefat conquered quietly and without bloodshed, the Australian forces were now ready to tackle the obstacle of the bridge without fear of attack from the rear.

As the dawn of 27 September arrived, the troops still in Zefat left the town to join the forces on the western bank of the Jordan River, who were by the bridge, close to the settlement of Mishmar HaYarden.

As they were some two kilometres (1.2 miles) from the river, one scout was sent north and another sent south, while a small team of three men was sent into the settlement of Mishmar HaYarden. The three who made their way to the settlement immediately drew fire from the enemy and exposed a number of previously concealed Turkish positions.

Following this, it became much easier for the Australian forces to estimate the numbers and firepower of the Turkish forces opposing them on the eastern bank of the river. The ALH forces estimated that there was somewhere in the region of 1,000 soldiers with two field guns and 14 machine guns on the Turkish side, an estimation that soon proved to be fairly accurate.

By the time the rest of the force had reached the Daughters of Jacob Bridge they already knew, based on information received by the soldiers and the reports of the front patrol force commanded by Bleechmoore, that the bridge had been bombed. The Australian forces then sent a force from the 9th Regiment of the 3rd Brigade to evaluate the defences around the bridge and discovered that they had a commanding view of the whole area from the southern edge of the Hula Lake, and all the way south of the bridge itself.

As the Australian vanguard was assessing the force pitched against them and targeting the enemy artillery battery, the Turkish forces managed to hit a British patrol plane, which had flown over at a low altitude. The event occurred at around 9am, and one of the shots fired at the plane wounded the pilot and damaged part of the controls of the aircraft.

The pilot managed to land the plane about a kilometre behind the Australian line, and soon a group of 15 Bedouins, some of them armed with rifles, made their way towards his position. The Australian force noticed this and sent a team of soldiers, who captured the Bedouins, disarmed them, and stayed to guard the plane, slightly diminishing the size of the available Australian force.

A strong defensive position

The commander of the German-Ottoman forces, Otto Liman von Sanders, who oversaw the retreat from Allenby's forces, was of a mind to hold a defensive line between the Samakh-Yarmouk area (located at the southern point of the Sea of Galilee) and the Hula Lake. Along this line, the bottleneck that was the Daughters of Jacob Bridge was one of the key elements in his defensive strategy. The Ottoman and German forces that retreated from Nazareth, Tiberias and Samakh, heading for Damascus, blew up the bridge after they crossed it and arrived at its eastern side. Some 100 Turkish soldiers who arrived from Damascus, plus a mobilised German machine gun unit, which arrived to assist them in holding their positions, joined these forces on the eastern banks of the Jordan River.

> "ALONG THIS LINE, THE BOTTLENECK THAT WAS THE BRIDGE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF JACOB WAS ONE OF THE KEY ELEMENTS IN HIS DEFENSIVE STRATEGY"

The force that arrived from Damascus was commanded by Captain von Keyserling, who deployed his soldiers to advantage posts above the river and by the possible crossing points along it. The German and Ottoman force on the eastern bank of the Jordan River was tasked with the mission of not only capturing and defending this pass of the river, but also to delay any attempts by the Australian force to advance eastward, and thus to help the retreating German and Ottoman forces get away. According to the Australian intelligence information, the forces guarding the bridge numbered no more than 1,000 soldiers.

Given that the bridge had been blown up, the attacking Australian forces were hard-pressed to find alternative solutions to pass the river, and the conditions of the terrain around the bridge were in no way to their advantage, to say the least.

In addition to them having to deal with crossing the river, the western slopes around the bridge were, and are to this day, very steep – a situation that hindered any plan for a mounted advance. The slopes on the eastern side were even steeper, which once again created a major problem for any plans for a swift attack once the crossing of the river was completed. The lack of bushes and hiding points on the western side was yet another problem for the Australians, as the Australian forces would be that much more exposed, and it turned the area into an ideal killing ground for the Germans and Ottomans on the eastern side to exploit.

The German and Ottoman forces held a higher position, with thicker bushes and large basalt boulders behind which they could hide on the eastern side. The bridge itself was already destroyed and unusable, so the German and Ottoman forces saw no need to focus on it, but the buildings on the western bank were a worthy target, being the only built shelters on the river's western side.

A watercolour painting by James McBey in 1918 shows the newly repaired bridge being crossed by Indian Lancers

Crossing the river

The Australian force at this stage held its fire and waited for reinforcements to arrive before engaging the enemy, all the while not sitting idle but assessing the best way to deal with the significant obstacle in front of them. The artillery, on the other hand, continued its bombardment of the German and Ottoman force, successfully hitting several of the enemy's positions.

At 2.30pm the order was given to advance on the target and cross the Jordan River. The manoeuvre began with the capture of positions on the ruined bridge itself and outflanking it from the south and the north.

The 3rd Brigade, headed by the 10th Regiment, was ordered to set out northward towards the pass just south of the Hula Lake. Supporting that force was the 9th ALH Regiment and the Nottinghamshire Royal Horse Artillery battery, with the 8th ALH Regiment bringing up the rear. By 6pm the 10th Regiment had reported that it had successfully crossed the river, and an hour later the 8th Regiment followed it. The crossing eastward was hard due to thick bushes on the river banks and the heavy fire from the German and Ottoman forces. All this time, the 9th Regiment stayed behind to provide cover fire.

Once on the eastern banks, the force was led by a Bedouin guide to the Damascus road, which led eastward towards Quneitra and Damascus. The 5th Brigade, minus the 15th Regiment, which was left to guard POWs at Degania on the southern shores of the Sea of Galilee, led the southward manoeuvre.

The first reinforcements to arrive was the French Régiment Mixte de Cavalerie, and it immediately entered the fighting, making its way towards the buildings on the western side of the bridge.

Due to the long and cumbersome movements of the mounted artillery batteries, which were already making their way to their north and south positions, the French force was mostly left without any cover. Even so, under heavy fire and with the number of casualties steadily growing, the French eventually succeeded in conquering their target. The Australian forces of the 4th Brigade and the 4th and 12th Regiments joined the French force at around 4pm, leaving some of their gunners as backup in the prison building held by the French to the west of the bridge.

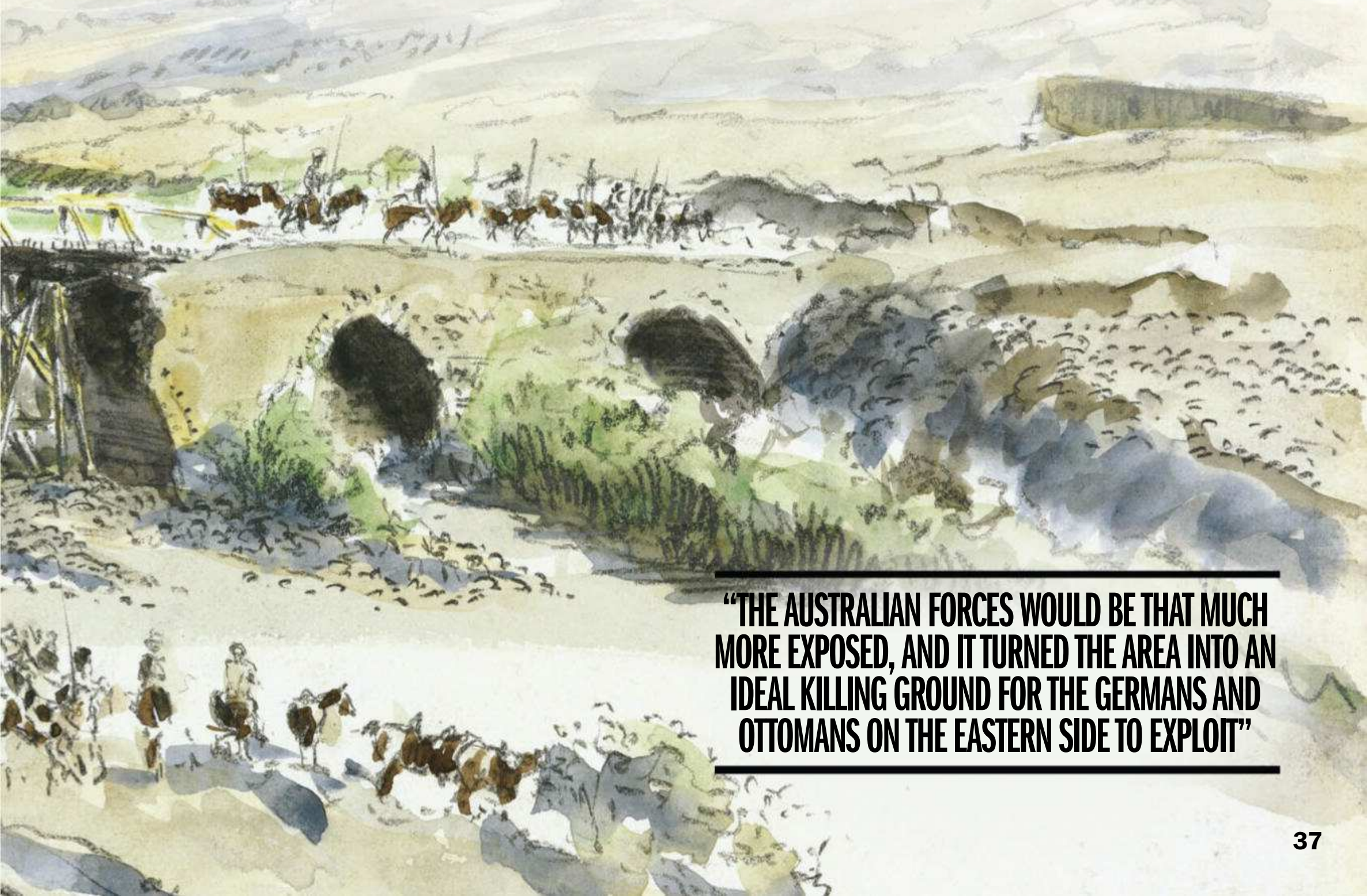
As the force arrived at the western bank a group from the 10th Regiment, commanded by Major Hamlin and Lieutenant Macnee, broke apart, while the main force continued on its way to the enemy camp at Deir Es-Saras. From there they planned to continue on the main road to Quneitra and Damascus.

The group led by Hamlin and Macnee was tasked with clearing the eastern bank of enemy soldiers, all the while advancing by foot through rough terrain and under fire. At a certain point the fighting turned into close combat as the soldiers attacked the Germans and Ottomans with bayonets.

Eventually the Australians gained the upper hand and came out victors, with over 50 captives and a substantial amount of looted goods. For this daring mission Hamlin received

***Above, top:** The bridge had a long history of war even before World War I: here the bridge is depicted in 1799, with British forces occupying the mountain in the distance during Napoleon's advance through the region*

***Above, bottom:** The Daughters of Jacob Bridge, having been repaired and made serviceable again*



"THE AUSTRALIAN FORCES WOULD BE THAT MUCH MORE EXPOSED, AND IT TURNED THE AREA INTO AN IDEAL KILLING GROUND FOR THE GERMANS AND OTTOMANS ON THE EASTERN SIDE TO EXPLOIT"

Men of the Australian Light Horse guard Ottoman prisoners

the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and Macnee the Military Cross. Lieutenant Wastell from the 9th Regiment also received a Military Cross for his actions during the battle, under heavy fire and with a substantial wound. It was this manoeuvre that caused the final retreat of the German and Ottoman forces.

At the same time as the crossing in the northern part of the bridge area, the forces on the southern side of the bridge prepared to cross the river close to the Crusader fort of Chastelet, aided by Battery A.

This crossing too was done under heavy fire. Company C of the 4th Regiment served as the vanguard for the crossing, and after navigating through the rocky and steep bank they found themselves at the village of Ed-Dora at around 7pm. The village is located southeast of the road leading to Quneitra and Damascus, in the vicinity of the modern-day town of Qazrin.

At 8.20pm the order to halt the river crossings until further notice was given, probably due to the difficulty of traversing the terrain in the darkness. The force that had already begun crossing could not advance anymore in the dark and spent the night near the village. The 12th Regiment finally crossed the river too at 2am on 28 September. The terrain did not allow for the crossing of the gunners with the vanguard, but it seemed as though by this time the battle was already won.

The German and Ottoman forces that held the eastern banks of the bridge were already retreating in their trucks towards Damascus, prompting the 4th Brigade to report that the bridge area was clear of enemy forces and that the French force could move eastwards freely.

As with the northern crossing, here too, medals were handed out. Sergeant Gill received a Military Medal and Sergeant Stockdale received a Mention in Dispatches.

The rest of the 4th Brigade crossed the river at 6am on the 28 September 1918 and took hold of the Khan (Caravanserai) on the eastern side of the bridge. All they found were 22 Turkish soldiers, mostly drunk from rum. They were all that was left of the enemy that had fought them the day before.

"BRITISH FORCES CONTINUED TO PURSUE THE OTTOMAN FORCES IN SYRIA EVEN AFTER THE CAPTURE OF DAMASCUS"

Almost an hour later German aircraft dropped bombs on the convoy crossing the bridge. One soldier was wounded and three horses were killed, but the Germans were unsuccessful in stopping or even delaying the crossing. This brought the Battle of the Daughters of Jacob Bridge to an end.

After the battle

The 4th Division had managed to conquer the bridge with minimal delay, and even before the dawn of 28 September, the bridging train was hard at work restoring and fixing the ruined arch of the bridge and making the bridge usable once more.

The 8th ALH Regiment moved to Tat Ahsein while the 10th Regiment caught the enemy camping at Dir Saras. By 9am the entire force had crossed the river and begun making its way forward to conquer Quneitra, and after that moved onto the main goal, Damascus.

The time spent fighting at the bridge was used by the 5th Indian Cavalry Division to close the gap that had formed due to delays the Indian force had encountered at Kfar Kana, on their way eastwards from Nazereth, and to rest at Rosh Pina.

The experience of crossing the river in this battle was used by the Australian forces to repeat the same tactics during their fight at Sa'sa', near Damascus. Here too, it was the 10th Regiment that was on the frontline and brought about the defeat of the opposing German and Ottoman force.

Even though the imperial forces managed to subdue a stubborn defensive force and to pass the substantial obstacle of a blown-up bridge, the German and Ottoman forces did manage to slightly delay and disrupt the original plan to conquer Damascus and capture the Fourth Turkish Army. However, this had no lasting impact on either objective and did not prevent the eventual fall of Syria.

Fall of Damascus

The success in crossing the bridge even though it was bombed, and in pushing the enemy force back, was eventually what led to the Allies successfully conquering the Syrian capital city of Damascus just four days later, almost exactly as originally planned.

It was the 3rd ALH Regiment, the same one that crossed the Jordan River just to the south of the Hula Lake, that was awarded the distinct honour of being the first to enter the city of Damascus. By the time they entered the city the Ottoman troops were no longer there, and the flags on the city roofs had been changed from Ottoman flags to those bearing Sharifian colours. Syria had surrendered to the Hashemite dynasty – part of the rewards the British gave the Hashemites for their alliance during the war.

The British forces continued to pursue the Ottomans in Syria even after the capture of Damascus, and even though they tried, the Ottomans had a hard time establishing a new line of defence, and one by one the cities fell to the Allies. Last to fall was the city of Aleppo on 26 October – a fall that effectively marked the end of the Palestine campaign of World War I. The Ottoman forces, led by General Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, finally managed to secure a line north of Aleppo, and eventually on 31 October 1918 signed a truce with the Allied forces.

The Allies had achieved the goal of completely destroying the Ottoman army in Syria, a move that pushed the Ottomans out of the war. In the course of the Palestine campaign the Allied forces counted some 5,666 killed, wounded or missing soldiers, and claimed to have taken 75,000 Turkish soldiers as prisoners.

11 days later, World War I would come to an end across all fronts.

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FOKKER EINDECKER

The Fokker Eindecker fighter aircraft made history with the combat deployment of its new synchronised firing system

WORDS **MIKE HASKEW**

A notable monoplane that flew during an era dominated by the biplane, the Fokker Eindecker made history during World War I as the first fighter to mount a successful synchronisation system that allowed the pilot to fire a machine gun forward through the spinning propeller. Both the aircraft and the synchronisation system were developed by Dutch aircraft designer Anthony Fokker, who worked with the German military aviation establishment from 1911 and throughout the years of World War I. The Eindecker was the first German aircraft built as a fighter, and for a brief period the plane ruled the skies above the Western Front.

Fokker sought to combine manoeuvrability and an operational, reliable synchronised firing system. The result of his design genius was the Eindecker series, a total of four variants that mounted the innovative weapons platform and enjoyed a distinct advantage over Allied aircraft, which did not field a similar forward-firing capability until later in the war. Fokker based his aircraft design on the Morane-

TWO-BLADE PROPELLER

The two-blade wooden propeller of the Fokker Eindecker was synchronised with the aircraft's machine guns to fire forward against enemy planes.

Illustration: Alex Pang www.alexpangillustrations.com

FOKKER EINDECKER

COMMISSIONED: 1915 **ORIGIN:** GERMANY
LENGTH: 7.2M (23FT 7IN) **RANGE:** 198KM (123MI)
ENGINE: OBERURSEL U.1 9-CYLINDER, 100-HORSEPOWER RADIAL **CREW:** 1
ARMAMENT: 1X 7.92MM PARABELLUM MG 14 MACHINE GUN

"FOKKER SOUGHT TO COMBINE MANEUVERABILITY AND AN OPERATIONAL, RELIABLE SYNCHRONISED FIRING SYSTEM. THE RESULT OF HIS DESIGN GENIUS WAS THE EINDECKER SERIES"

RUDDER
Among the improvements Anthony Fokker made to the original French Morane-Saulnier design was a comma-shaped rudder that improved the pilot's overall control of an inherently unstable aircraft.

SHEET METAL SURFACES
Sheet metal surfaces on the Fokker Eindecker were distinctive in appearance, with the addition of machined 'turning' that resulted in the appearance of geometric patterns in the metal itself.

FUSELAGE AND FRAME
The fuselage of the Fokker Eindecker was lengthened in Fokker's adaptation of the French Morane-Saulnier H sporting aircraft, and the plane became a formidable fighter during World War I. Rather than a wooden frame, Anthony Fokker chose to utilise a configuration of chrome and molybdenum, covered by fabric, for strong tensile strength with the necessary degree of flexibility to withstand jarring takeoff, landing and aerial manoeuvre.

Saulnier H, a sporting plane manufactured by the prominent French company. He studied a deflector system of reinforced propeller blades that had been invented by French air pioneer Roland Garros to ultimately determine that synchronisation was a preferred option that was indeed possible.

By the spring of 1915, the aircraft prototype was in the air, fitted with the synchroniser and hunting Allied aircraft. It validated its superiority over enemy planes that were unarmed, or carried machine guns either mounted on the upper wing or operated by an observer and firing rearward. The so-called 'Fokker Scourge' ensued, but it lasted for only a few months before newer Allied aircraft types brought a degree of parity. These included the French Nieuport 11 biplane and British Airco DH.2 pusher-type fighter, with rear-facing propellers that cleared the forward machine gun's field of fire.

Illustrations: Alex Pang

The cockpit was tight but ergonomically efficient

COCKPIT

The cramped Fokker Eindecker cockpit included the single pilot's seat and central stick for aircraft control. The instrument panel featured a fuel gauge high and to the left for visibility, with a large ammunition box for the single 7.92mm machine gun just below. The ignition switch and RPM gauge were in the lower left, along with fuel controls. A switch to engage the machine gun synchronisation gear was placed in the upper right, just above a box to capture spent cartridges. The air pressure gauge, oil pulsator and hand pump for the fuel system were further down on the right side. Hinged panels in the lower deck could be opened to improve the pilot's view.

The vulnerability of the pilot to enemy fire is apparent here. Only a thin sheet of metal protected him against bullets and shell fragments

ARMAMENT

The Fokker Eindecker series was armed with a succession of 7.92mm machine guns, either the Maschinengewehr MG 08, Parabellum MG 14 or Spandau LMG 08. These were typically single mounts, affixed to the engine cowling, offset to the right forward of the cockpit and positioned for synchronised fire through the arc of the propeller. Experiments were conducted with twin mounts, and famed ace Max Immelmann briefly utilised a configuration of three machine guns. The Maschinengewehr guns were adapted from infantry weapons, while the Parabellum was purpose-built for aircraft. Each was belt-fed and capable of a sustained rate of fire of about 600 rounds per minute.

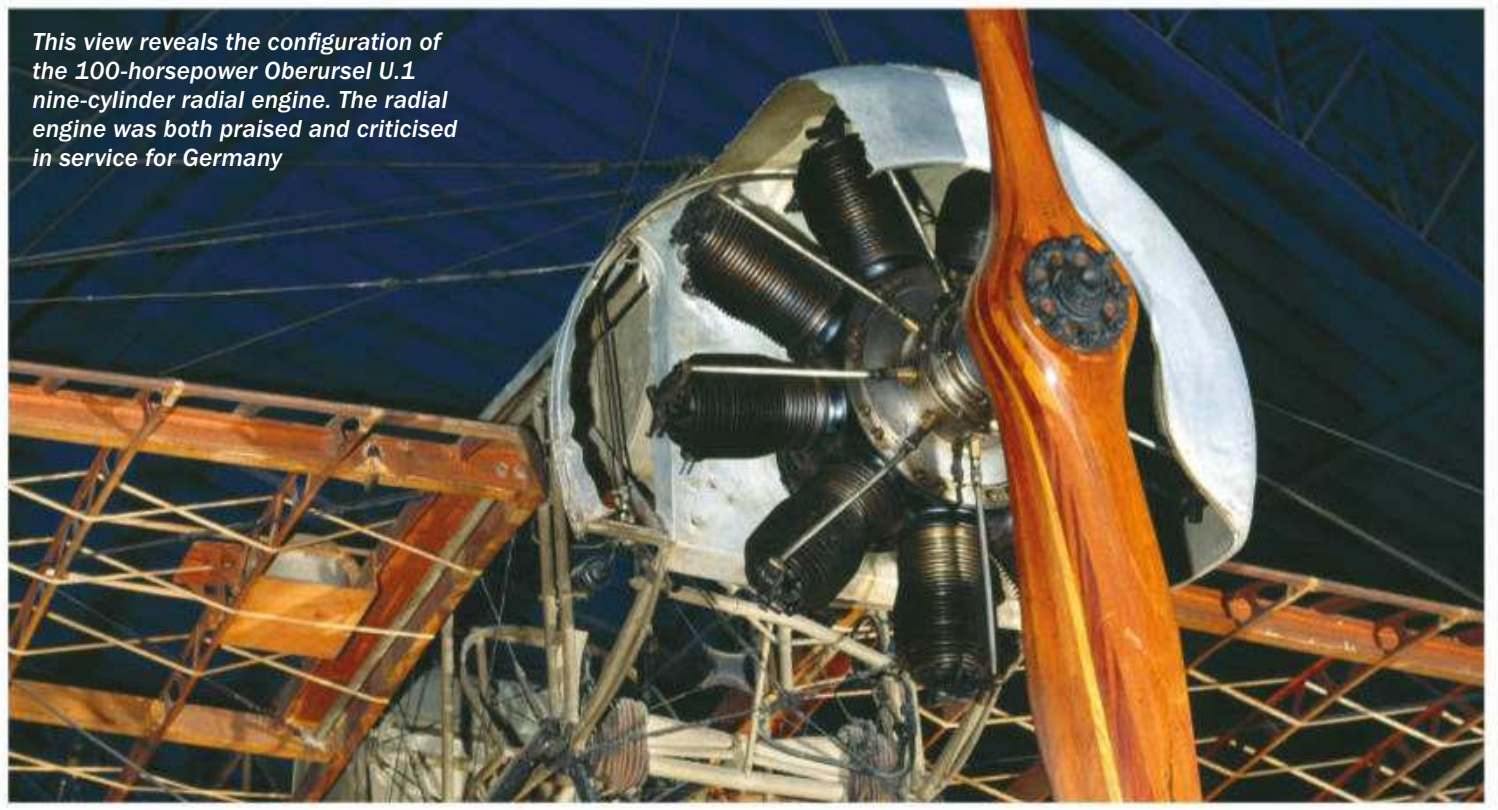
The introduction of forward-firing machine guns made the Fokker Eindecker a lethal killing machine. Note the belt-fed system adjacent to the gun mount

“THE MASCHINENGEWEHR GUNS WERE ADAPTED FROM INFANTRY WEAPONS, WHILE THE PARABELLUM WAS PURPOSE-BUILT FOR AIRCRAFT”

This three-weapon system of machine guns was briefly employed by Eindecker fighter ace Max Immelmann but was later abandoned

ENGINE

The early Fokker Eindecker, designated E.I, mounted the seven-cylinder, 80-horsepower Oberursel U.0 rotary petrol engine, a license-built copy of the French-designed Gnome Lambda or Delta rotary engines that the fledgling German aircraft industry had been producing before the outbreak of World War I. The later E.II and E.III Eindeckers were powered by the Oberursel U.1 nine-cylinder, 100-horsepower rotary engine, while the E.IV was fitted with the 14-cylinder Oberursel U.III. The engines were air-cooled and reliable. However, although the plane was light, it could achieve a maximum speed of only 140 kilometres per hour (87 miles per hour) with the larger powerplant.



This view reveals the configuration of the 100-horsepower Oberursel U.1 nine-cylinder radial engine. The radial engine was both praised and criticised in service for Germany

The Fokker Eindecker was a menacing sight in 1915. It was a challenge to fly, but in the hands of skilled pilots it dominated the air during the 'Fokker Scourge'

German ground crewmen pose with their Fokker Eindecker

DESIGN

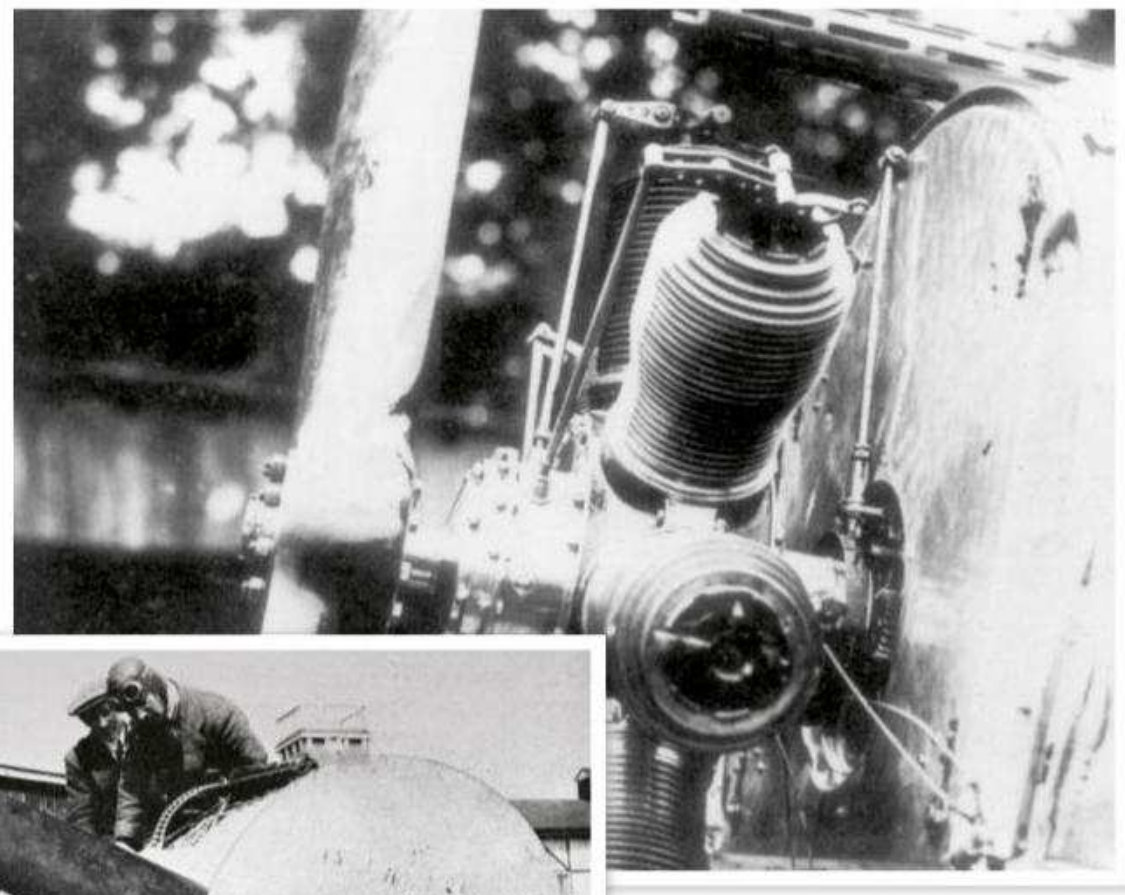
Anthony Fokker modified the French Morane-Saulnier H as a single-seat light reconnaissance aircraft, designated the M.5. First flown in 1913, the M.5 became the prototype of Fokker's famed Eindecker fighter. Improvements over the French design included a lengthened fuselage, with a chrome-molybdenum steel tubing covered by fabric rather than a wooden frame. The rudder was reshaped to resemble a comma, and the fixed undercarriage and landing gear were constructed with the bracing pylons below the wings. The primary production E.III variant was improved over earlier designs, with its larger horseshoe cowling and wings with narrower chord, or distance from the leading to trailing edge. Sheet metal surfaces were distinctive with 'engine turning', the appearance of machined geometric patterns.

***Right:** Anthony Fokker designed successful aircraft for the German armed forces during WWI, including Eindeckers, the D.VII biplane and the famous Dr.I triplane*

SYNCHRONISATION SYSTEM

The innovative synchronisation system developed by Anthony Fokker that made the Eindecker fighter so lethal in the summer of 1915 was conceived as an interrupter gear that could prevent damage to the propeller when the forward-firing machine gun fired through it.

Fokker calculated that the Eindecker propeller was spinning at a rate of 1,200 turns per minute, totalling 2,400 opportunities for bullets to strike one of its two blades. The 7.92mm machine gun fired at approximately 600 rounds per minute. Therefore, its fire could be interrupted at a regular rate to avoid catastrophe. Fokker designed a cam that was connected directly to the engine and either allowed the machine gun to fire or restricted its operation, depending on the position of the propeller blade. A shaft was originally joined from the oil pump to the cam and was then replaced with a large cam wheel driven directly from the crankcase of the rotary engine.



***Left:** Fokker Synchronisation gear set up for ground firing test. The wooden disc records the point where each round passed*

***Above:** An early Fokker Eindecker with cowl removed, showing Fokker's original Stangensteuerung gear connected directly to the oil pump drive at the rear of the engine*

This image of a modern Fokker Eindecker reveals the structure of the fixed undercarriage that was designed to handle the impact of difficult landings and add stability to the aircraft, both on the ground and in the air

SERVICE HISTORY

ENTERING SERVICE WITH GERMAN SQUADRONS IN THE SPRING OF 1915, THE FOKKER EINDECKER SHAPED THE FUTURE OF AERIAL COMBAT

On 24 June 1915, Lieutenant Oswald Boelcke, the leader of the first generation of German fighter pilots, took to the air in the Fokker Eindecker, the initial operational flight of the new aircraft. It was innovative for its single-wing construction and its synchronisation gear that allowed the forward-firing machine gun to shoot through the propeller arc.

Boelcke, fellow ace Max Immelmann and other German pilots soon made the Eindecker dominant in the skies over the Western Front. During the dark months of the 'Fokker Scourge', British pilots began referring to their planes as 'Fokker fodder' simply because they had no adequate means of fighting back against the marauding German aircraft.

On the evening of 1 July 1915, Lieutenant Kurt Wintgens probably recorded the first aerial victory for an Eindecker pilot. About 6pm, Wintgens encountered a French Morane-Saulnier Type L two-seater observation plane and attacked. As the French observer fired back with a rifle, Wintgens peppered the enemy's engine with 7.92mm machine gun bullets. The French machine was forced out of the sky and went down behind Allied lines, so Wintgens's kill could not be officially confirmed.

Only 416 Eindecker fighters were completed, including 249 examples of the E.III, the main production model and the first to become available in sufficient numbers to organise true fighter squadrons. On 1 August 1915, Boelcke and Immelmann shocked their British adversaries, pouncing on a formation of Royal Aircraft Factory BE2c reconnaissance and bomber aircraft that were returning from a mission. Boelcke's guns jammed, but Immelmann chased a BE2c for ten minutes, pouring hundreds of bullets into the plane, which crashed. That summer, Boelcke and Immelmann claimed 13 kills, while seven other German pilots shot down another 15 Allied planes.

The Fokker Scourge ended in early 1916 with the introduction of new Allied fighter types. But the Fokker Eindecker – soon outmoded – had already revolutionised aerial warfare.

"BRITISH PILOTS BEGAN REFERRING TO THEIR PLANES AS 'FOKKER FODDER' SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY HAD NO ADEQUATE MEANS OF FIGHTING BACK AGAINST THE MARAUDING GERMAN AIRCRAFT"

Images: Alamy, Getty, Alex Pang

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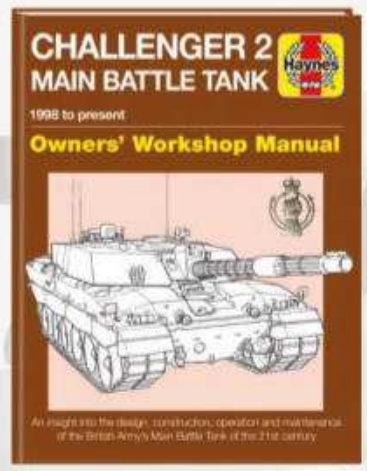

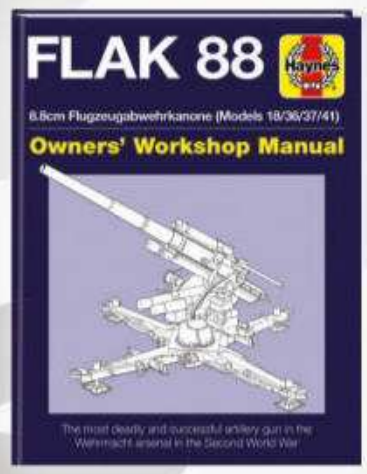

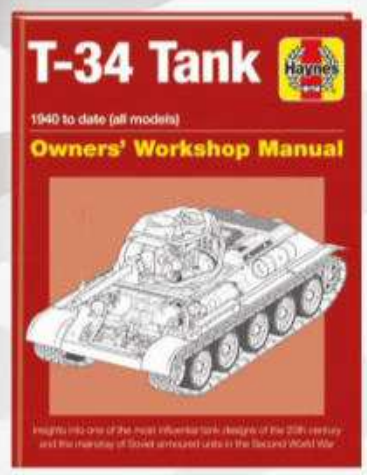

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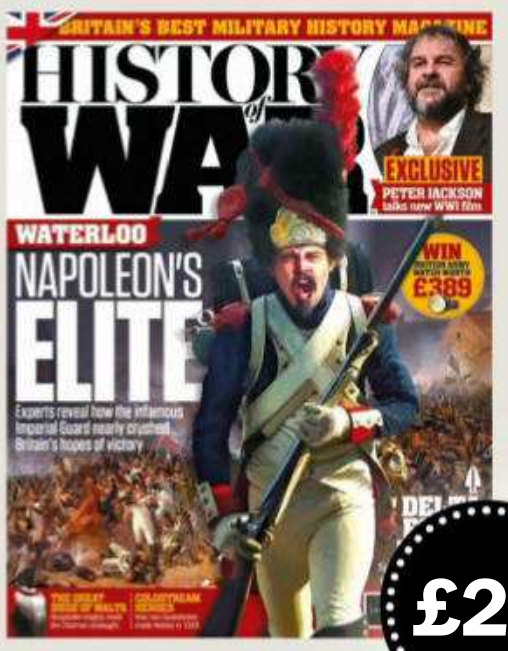

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Heroes of the Victoria Cross

CYRIL FRISBY & THOMAS JACKSON

On 27 September 1918, both these men of the 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards, led a lethal assault against enemy machine gun positions during the Battle of the Canal du Nord, earning the regiment two Victoria Crosses on the same day

WORDS **MURRAY DAHM**

Following the German Spring Offensive in March 1918, the Allies launched a series of successful counterattacks from May to July 1918 that forced the Germans to fall back. These were followed by a series of Allied attacks, which have become known as the Hundred Days Offensive, beginning with the Battle of Amiens in early August. These campaigns drove the Germans out of France and contributed to bringing World War I to a successful close.

Success at Amiens was followed by attacks launched in the north at Albert, adhering to Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig's plans to avoid massive losses. The forces that were involved consisted mainly of men from Great Britain and the Commonwealth (especially Canada, Australia and New Zealand). Further successes at Mont Saint-Quentin, Bapaume and the Second Battle of the Somme followed. These attacks met determined resistance but were eventually successful, with the Allies taking the Drocourt-Quéant Line on 2 September. This was 'Wotanstellung' to the Germans, the western edge of the formidable Hindenburg Line defences. On the night of 2 September, the Germans fell back to the Canal du Nord.

Further assaults across a wide front pushed the Germans back to the Hindenburg Line during September, at Havrincourt, Saint-Mihiel and Epehy, carried out by forces from nearly every Allied army. The Allied supreme commander Ferdinand Foch's 'Grand Offensive' on the Hindenburg Line itself began on 26 September with units from the French and American Expeditionary Forces attacking in the Meuse-Argonne, followed by Belgian, British and French troops attacking at Ypres in Flanders on 28 September.

> **"THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE DAY UNTIL HE WAS KILLED THIS YOUNG N.C.O. SHOWED THE GREATEST VALOUR AND DEVOTION TO DUTY AND SET AN INSPIRING EXAMPLE TO ALL"**
>
> **– London Gazette, 26 November 1918**

The British Fourth Army (consisting of British, Australian and American troops) began its assault on 29 September at the Battle of Saint-Quentin Canal. The attack on the Canal du Nord was launched on 27 September by the British Third Army (consisting of troops from Britain, Canada and New Zealand), deliberately planned to occur one day after the Meuse-Argonne Offensive and a day before the Flanders campaign so that Allied forces would not be met with huge numbers of German reserves, which could have been brought to bear against a single Allied attack.

The Canal du Nord was an incomplete canal system that stretched from the Oise River to the Dunkirk-Scheldt Canal. Its construction had begun in 1913, but the sections of the canal were in various states of completion when war broke out in 1914. This meant that in some sections the ground was difficult and boggy, while in others the incomplete canal workings created almost perfect fortifications for the defending German forces. The retreating Germans also exacerbated the challenging terrain by flooding and damming various sections, to hold up an Allied advance or force

Portrait of Thomas Norman Jackson in the Coldstream Guards' uniform

Portrait of Cyril Frisby as a captain in the Coldstream Guards (note the button pairs on his tunic and the Coldstream regimental badge on his cap)

"CAPT. FRISBY REALISED AT ONCE THAT UNLESS THIS POST WAS CAPTURED THE WHOLE ADVANCE IN THIS AREA WOULD FAIL"

– London Gazette, 26 November 1918

them into the fields of fire of the copious machine gun and field artillery positions they had set up to defend the line of the canal.

The Canal du Nord faced both the British Third and First Armies. The Third Army was also expected to provide support for the British Fourth Army in the assault that would launch on 29 September. Speed in achieving the aims of the assault was essential, but several of the other offensives became bogged down after initial success (in the Meuse-Argonne and Flanders campaigns). Breaching the Canal du Nord would leave the path open to Cambrai. The First Army was tasked with crossing and penetrating the Canal du Nord northwest of Cambrai, while the Third Army would need to take the canal as far as the Scheldt Canal (and so be in a position to support the Fourth Army assault on Saint-Quentin on the 29th). Although it was mainly an infantry action because of the terrain, some tanks were also incorporated.

The 1st Battalion of the Coldstream Guards was part of the Third Army and was posted on the extreme left of the army's line. In keeping with the regimental motto, 'Nulli Secundus' ('Second to None'), they were placed on the extreme left of the line so that they would literally be second to none. The 1st Battalion was tasked with securing a crossing of the Canal du Nord on the Demicourt-Graincourt road, almost directly west of Cambrai. The attack was launched at 5.20am on 27 September in total darkness. Immediately to the Guards' north, the Canadian Corps (part of First Army) was tasked with capturing the important high ground in Bourlon Wood.

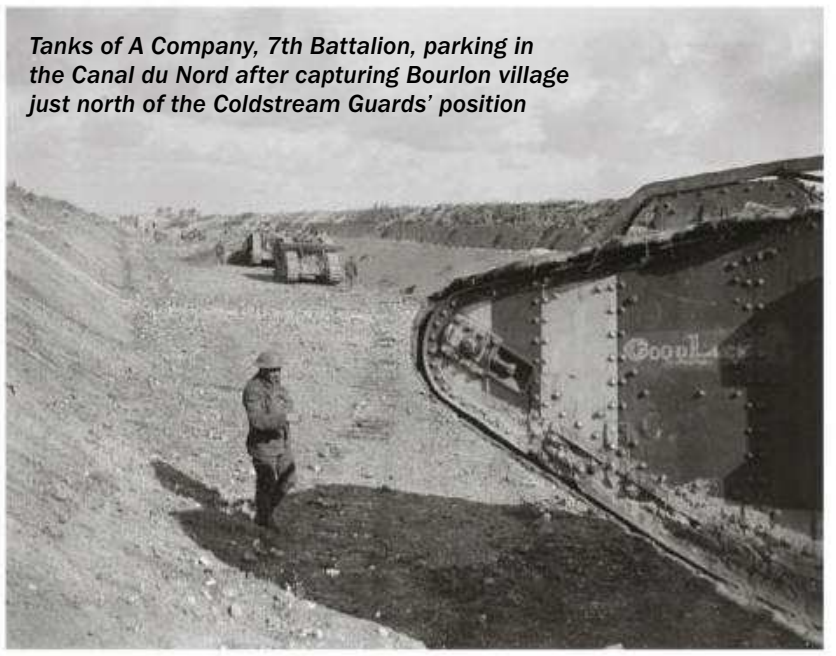
Cyril Hubert Frisby was acting captain of a company of the Coldstream Guards during the assault on the canal. He had enlisted as a private in the Hampshire Regiment in 1916 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Coldstream Guards in March 1917. The Guards had suffered high casualties among its officers, so Second Lieutenant Frisby was put in command of a company as acting captain.

Born in Barnet, Hertfordshire, he was eligible to join the Guards because Barnet had been a stop on George Monck's 685-kilometre march from Coldstream to London in 1659/60, and the counties through which Monck had marched remained the recruitment corridor for the regiment. This was unusual for the British Army, since most regiments were open to anyone from the four home nations.

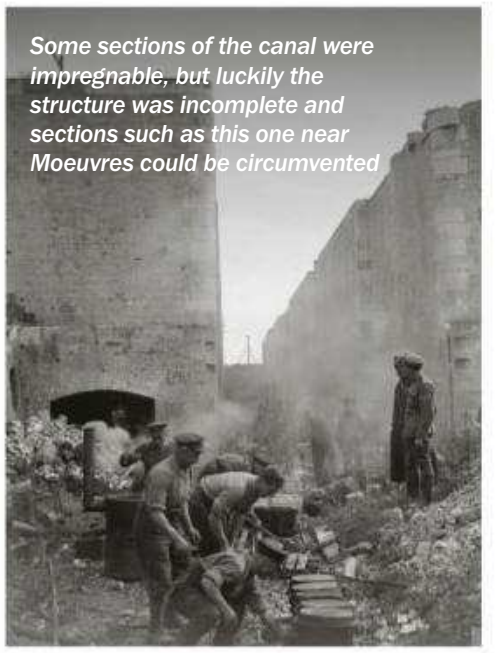
Frisby witnessed the leading platoon "come under annihilating machine-gun fire" from a strong machine gun nest situated under an iron bridge on the far side of the canal. The platoon was unable to advance even when waves of reinforcements arrived. Captain Frisby realised immediately that unless the machine gun nest was taken, the entire advance would fail. If the advance failed there, then the contemporaneous assaults on the canal to the north and south would also be jeopardised. Frisby knew what needed to be done and called for volunteers to follow him across the canal.

The first man to volunteer was Lance Corporal Thomas Norman Jackson. Hailing from Swinton, near Doncaster in South Yorkshire, Jackson was 17 when war broke out in 1914. He volunteered in the 1st Battalion of the

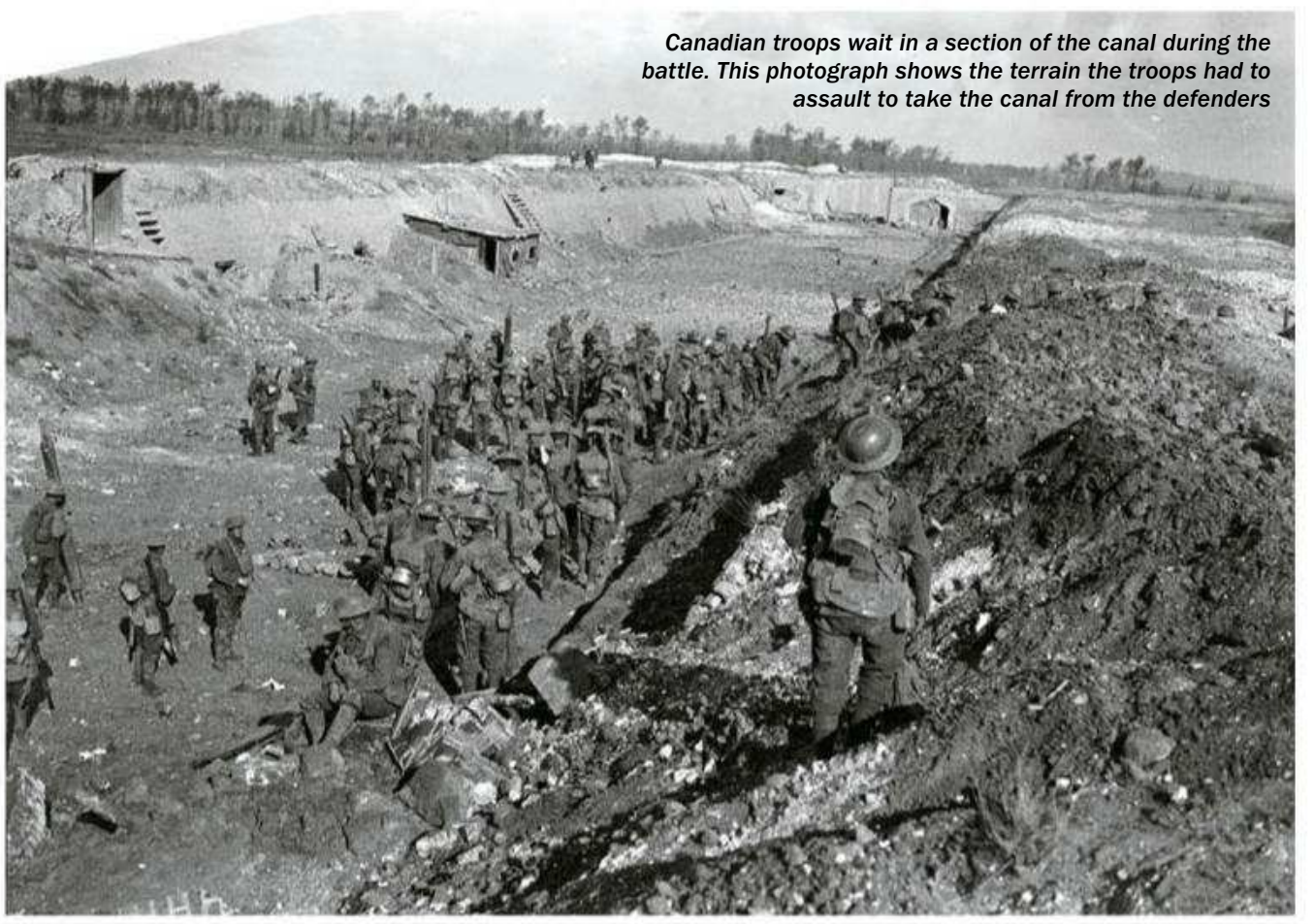
The Germans destroyed the bridges over sections of the canal, forcing the Allies to assault their positions across difficult terrain



Tanks of A Company, 7th Battalion, parking in the Canal du Nord after capturing Bourlon village just north of the Coldstream Guards' position



Some sections of the canal were impregnable, but luckily the structure was incomplete and sections such as this one near Moeuvres could be circumvented



Canadian troops wait in a section of the canal during the battle. This photograph shows the terrain the troops had to assault to take the canal from the defenders

Coldstream Guards in September 1916, his home also sitting in the traditional recruitment corridor of the regiment.

Two other men also volunteered to accompany Captain Frisby, and together the four men dashed to the canal edge and climbed down over the barbed wire into the dry canal bed, under "intense point-blank machine gun fire" from the nest. They ran forward and succeeded in capturing the machine gun post, taking two guns and 12 prisoners. In capturing the machine gun post the four men engaged in desperate hand-to-hand fighting. Frisby was wounded in the leg by a bayonet thrust but remained at his post to command further actions during the day.

For both Frisby and Jackson, this action was the mainstay of their recommendation for the Victoria Cross. Both men's citations, however, highlighted their further actions later the same morning. The actions of Frisby, Jackson and their colleagues enabled the advance of the Coldstream Guards companies to continue. Frisby then supported the neighbouring Coldstream Guards company to his right, which had lost all of its officers and sergeants. He organised its defences, and with them held off a fierce German counterattack.

Lance Corporal Jackson went forward from the captured machine gun post to other tasks. Later that day his company was ordered to clear an enemy trench. Jackson was the first man into the position, encouraging his comrades and shouting, "Come on boys!" as he led the charge. He entered the trench and killed the first two Germans he encountered but was then shot in the head, killing him instantly. The citations for both men praised the exemplary nature of their conduct for others to emulate – Frisby being described as a "splendid example to all the ranks" and Jackson's devotion to duty "an inspiring example to all".

> **"BY HIS PERSONAL VALOUR AND INITIATIVE HE RESTORED THE SITUATION AND ENABLED THE ATTACKING COMPANIES TO CONTINUE TO ADVANCE"**
>
> **– London Gazette, 26 November 1918**

North of the Guards, the Canadian Corps had constructed wooden bridges to cross the canal because it was flooded in their sector. The Bourlon Woods and its high ground was captured, and by the end of 27 September, all objectives were reached.

Lance Corporal Jackson was buried with full honours in Sanders Keep Military Cemetery, Graincourt-les-Havrincourt. His fiancée and sister were presented with his Victoria Cross on 29 March 1919 by King George V at Buckingham Palace. Captain Frisby received his Victoria Cross at the same investiture ceremony. In addition to the two Victoria Crosses for Frisby and Jackson of the Coldstream Guards, another ten Victoria Crosses were awarded to participants in the Battle of the Canal du Nord – men among the Canadians and the other regiments south of the Coldstream Guards (the Grenadier Guards and other regiments) at Flesquieres. They were mostly awarded for conduct in crossing the canal at various points in the face of extreme enemy machine gun fire.

The Allied victory at the Canal du Nord was hard won and costly. Although the Germans were on the defensive and had suffered reverses in the months leading up to the battle, they put up a fierce resistance and mounted several determined counterattacks during the battle. The success of the battle opened up the route to Cambrai and the decisive Allied Victory at the Battle of Cambrai in October 1918, notable for the relatively low number of Allied casualties.

Before the war, Thomas Jackson had been employed at the Mexborough Locomotive Depot. For reasons unknown, Lance Corporal Jackson's name was not added to the Great Central Railway Memorial, built in 1922. This error was corrected in 2016 when his name was finally added to the memorial.

Frisby returned to the London Stock Exchange after the war, where he had been a jobber (or dealer) since 1911. His brother Lionel joined him there. Lionel had been awarded a DSO with the 6th Battalion Welsh Regiment at Maissemy and Pontru in September 1918. The two were ironically (if unkindly) known at the stock exchange as 'the cowards'. Thereafter Cyril Frisby achieved fame as a sports fisherman, especially in regard to tuna. He died in 1961.

A single file of infantry advances during the Battle of the Canal du Nord

COLDSTREAM GUARDS VETERANS

YOU CAN HELP VETERANS OF THE REGIMENT IN NEED OF SUPPORT

A dinner took place at Wellington Barracks on 27 September 2018 to commemorate the centenary of the earning of the two VCs – with the aim of raising much-needed funds to look after present-day veterans, the wounded and their dependants. If any reader would like to make a donation to support the Coldstream Guard veterans, they can do so by making an online donation to Coldstream Guards VC Dinner, Sort Code 30 11 75, Account 31327760 or by sending a cheque made payable to Coldstream VC Dinner, and send to:

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DELTA

25 years ago, American special operations forces fought a brutal 17-hour battle in the streets of Mogadishu, Somalia. Here, four Delta Force survivors of 'Maalintii Rangers' – the 'Day of the Rangers' – discuss their experience

WORDS **LEIGH NEVILLE**

3 October 1993 will forever be remembered as the date of the Battle of Mogadishu. Filmed as the Hollywood blockbuster *Black Hawk Down* and based on Mark Bowden's best-selling book of the same title, 'Operation Gothic Serpent' culminated in what has been described as the "longest firefight involving American troops since Vietnam". A small force of US special operations forces, principally drawn from the Rangers and Delta Force, battled several thousand armed Somalis as they attempted to recover the bodies of their fallen comrades.

For Delta, the Mogadishu mission began months earlier, as they were warned of a possible upcoming operation to capture Somali warlord Mohammed Farah Aideed. He had become a thorn in the side of the United Nations humanitarian operation in Somalia, ambushing UN peacekeepers and pilfering supplies intended for the civilian victims of the drought and civil war that had ravaged the East African nation.

Retired Sergeant First Class and now Dr. Norman Hooten (who provided the basis for Eric Bana's character in *Black Hawk Down*) remembers, "That mission grew from one or two teams. It went to Charlie 1 Troop of C-Squadron, and it grew and grew until it was a whole squadron plus."

Along with the C-Squadron operators, Rangers from B-Company of 3rd Battalion, 75th Rangers would provide the muscle to secure the target area, while Delta conducted the mission of capturing Aideed. They would be flown into

"OPERATION GOTHIC SERPENT CULMINATED IN WHAT HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS THE 'LONGEST FIREFIGHT INVOLVING AMERICAN TROOPS SINCE VIETNAM'"

AT MOG

Ridley Scott's film Black Hawk Down brought the Battle of Mogadishu to life on screen, but in his book, Leigh Neville reveals the real story of the events in Somalia, in the words of the men who served

Norm Hooten (far right) with the members of F-Team and their assigned Little Bird, 'Star 44'

Image: Leigh Neville

The burning remains of a Task Force Ranger cargo Humvee, disabled and abandoned near the target building

Michael Moser (second from right) and B-Team with Little Bird 'Star 41', which inserted them on 3 October

Image: Leigh Neville

action by the 160th 'Night stalkers' in heavily modified Black Hawks and Little Birds. Together they would be known as Task Force Ranger.

The early missions were aimed at capturing Aideed himself. Retired Delta Staff Sergeant Michael Moser explains that Task Force Ranger had two principal templates to capture Aideed: "These two templates were; vehicular convoy intercept, and building assault. The intelligence apparatus that would trigger a stand up of the task force would include some information as to whether our HVTs [high-value targets] were likely to be in transit [vehicle intercept] or static [building assault]."

After intelligence showed that Aideed had gone into hiding, Task Force Ranger switched to a new target set – his Habr Gidr aides and lieutenants, in the hope of disrupting Aideed's organisation and potentially leading them to the man himself. On the morning of 3 October, the task force received actionable intelligence that Abdi Hassan Awale and Omar Salad Elmi, two top advisers to Aideed, were meeting that day near the Olympic Hotel in downtown Mogadishu.

Captain Scott Miller, Delta's ground force commander that day (currently Lieutenant General Miller in command of US forces in Afghanistan) noted, "3 October was a Sunday, which was traditionally a down day for the task force. The idea was a quick in, secure the target, then quick out."

The plan was straightforward. The 160th would land Delta and the Rangers at the target site. Delta would conduct the capture while the Rangers manned blocking positions on surrounding streets. A Ranger ground convoy in trucks and Humvees would drive to the target site and evacuate the combined Delta and Ranger force along with their prisoners. Time on the ground was to be no longer than 30 minutes to negate any organised resistance by the Somalis.

At 3.42pm that Sunday afternoon, the first Little Bird touched down, depositing its Delta team into the street outside the target building. The tremendous amount of dust kicked up by the helicopters reduced visibility to a bare minimum. Hooten recalls, "I remember the dust that had been kicked up from the lead birds going in was so bad that we couldn't even see the ground. I thought we were roping, so I threw the rope and stepped off and I was on the ground. It was a two-foot (0.6-metre) fast-rope!"

Unusually, Hooten could hear gunfire as he and his team raced towards their objective: "As the bird lifted off you could already hear small-arms fire. On the other missions the fire didn't start until the exfil, and it was unusual that you would receive any fire early on. We were already exchanging fire before we got into the house."

Retired Delta Sergeant First Class Paul Leonard's C-Team were the first into the target building: "C-Team entered the building first. The first room to the right, which only had curtain for door cover, and [fellow operator Sergeant First Class] Gary Keeney and I cleared the room and found the guy we were looking for that day, probably Salad. I threw him to the floor in the main room."

Once the prisoners were secured, Delta gave the all clear and the Ranger ground convoy moved forward. As Delta loaded the prisoners onto the trucks, the amount of fire was

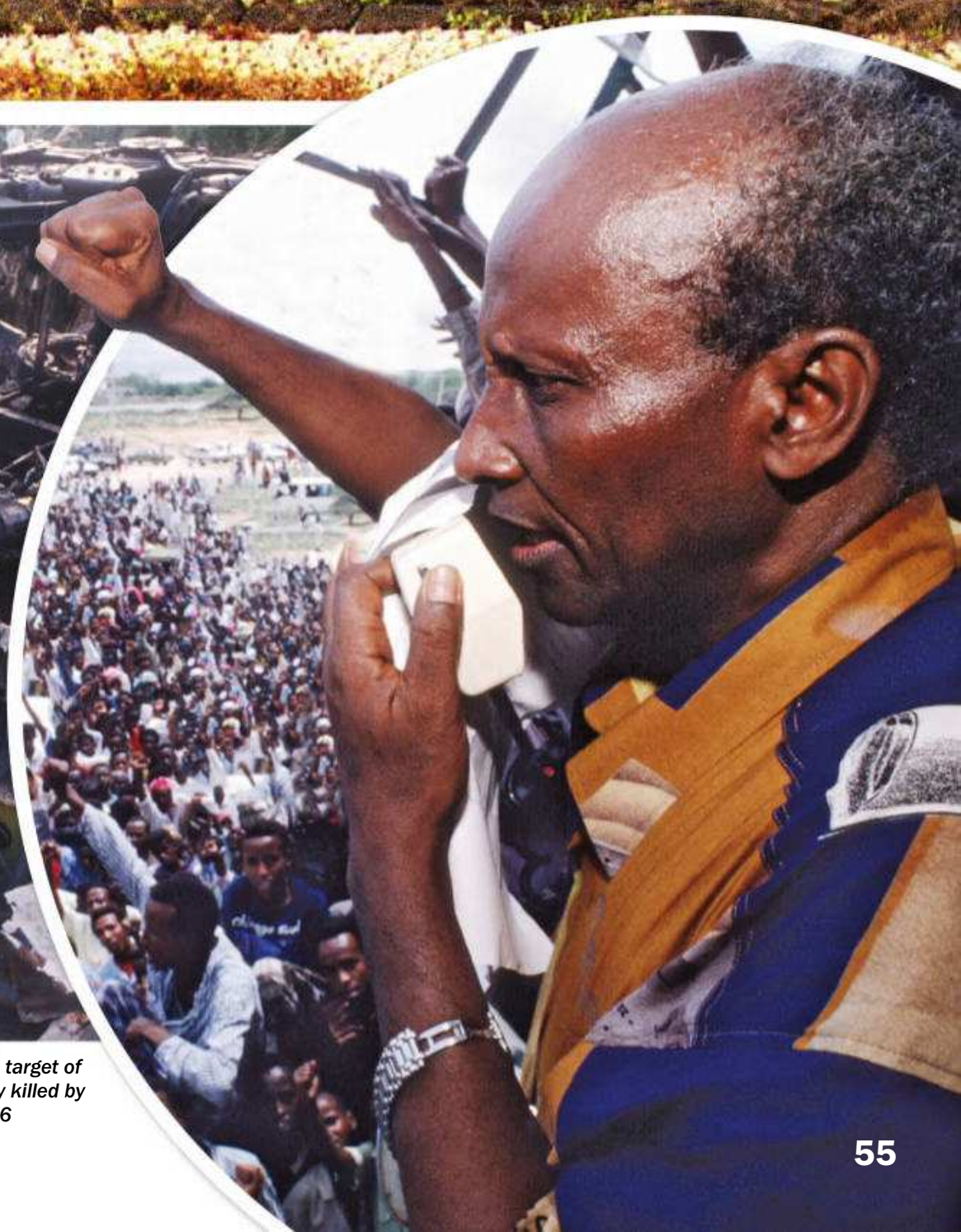
"I REMEMBER THE DUST THAT HAD BEEN KICKED UP FROM THE LEAD BIRDS GOING IN WAS SO BAD THAT WE COULDN'T EVEN SEE THE GROUND. I THOUGHT WE WERE ROPING, SO I THREW THE ROPE AND STEPPED OFF AND I WAS ON THE GROUND. IT WAS A TWO-FOOT FAST-ROPE!"

A Somali militiaman passes the burnt-out hulk of a Malaysian Condor APC, struck by an RPG while evacuating Task Force Ranger

A US soldier in the skies above Mogadishu just days after the disastrous Battle of Mogadishu

Black Hawk pilot Mike Durant, the sole survivor of Super 64, after his release from captivity

***Above:** The wreckage of Super 64 and the site of the last stand of Delta snipers Shughart and Gordon*



***Right:** Mohammed Farah Aideed, the target of Task Force Ranger. He was eventually killed by one of his former compatriots in 1996*

increasing. “We were taking a lot of fire already. Bullets were coming in the window. When we were going back down the stairs I said, ‘This is going to be a nightmare as people are shooting at us already,’” recalls Leonard.

The main convoy was preparing to depart when one of the orbiting helicopters, a Black Hawk with the radio callsign ‘Super 61’, was shot down over the city. Hooten says, “I was on the east side of the building and saw it start to spin, so I didn’t see the impact of the RPG, I saw the aircraft lose control and crash. We could not see the aircraft once it crashed because of all the rooftops. It was a little further away than we thought.”

Immediately, Hooten, Moser and the majority of the Delta element set off on foot towards the crash site. Leonard and Keeney were assigned to guard the prisoners on the ground convoy. At the crash site, Sergeant First Class Jim Smith, the Delta sniper team leader and one of four Delta snipers who had been on board the stricken helicopter, came to: “My main concern was that we were immediately receiving enemy fire. [Staff Sergeant] Dan [Busch] left the wreckage almost immediately and I wanted to get out of the wreckage to assist him with protecting our mates still in the wreckage. I shot initially the two that Dan had engaged and then another four.” Moments later he himself was hit: “An assailant came from the front of the helicopter and fired an extended burst from an AK on full auto and hit me with one shot. I received only one gunshot wound to the left shoulder. I then shot him.”

As Smith and the other snipers held off the Somalis racing to the downed helicopter, Hooten and Moser fought their way towards the crash site. At one point they went a block too far, and as they corrected, “That’s when [Sergeant First Class] Earl [Fillmore] got hit, and that one burst of fire that hit Earl Fillmore actually hit Mike Moser in the arm as well.

“I HAD TO SHOOT AN ASSAILANT DOWN THE STREET, AND THEN I DRAGGED HIM WITH ONE HAND AND SHOT MY RIFLE WITH THE OTHER HAND”

When Earl got hit we all returned fire immediately, and as we were returning fire Mike got hit through his right forearm.” The Delta and Ranger element were forced to strongpoint buildings to treat their wounded.

At the crash site, a Little Bird had courageously landed near the downed helicopter, and Smith carried the grievously wounded Busch towards it: “As the Little Bird landed, I ran out and got Dan and dragged him to the bird. Initially I dragged him two-handed, with me travelling backwards. But I was receiving fire so I had to shoot an assailant down the street, and then I dragged him with one hand and shot my rifle with the other hand.” Smith and Busch were loaded into the Little Bird and a frantic dash was made to save Busch’s life, but he sadly died soon after at the field hospital.

As the Little Bird lifted off from the crash site, the combat search and rescue (CSAR) helicopter arrived overhead, and its mixed Delta, Ranger and US Air Force team fast-roped

C-Squadron, Delta Force with attached SEAL and US Air Force Special Tactics operators outside their base at Mogadishu Airport

Image: Leigh Neville

THE 1ST SPECIAL FORCES OPERATIONAL DETACHMENT DELTA

DELTA FORCE WAS FOUNDED IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 1972 MUNICH MASSACRE AS AMERICA'S PRIMARY HOSTAGE RESCUE AND COUNTER-TERRORIST FORCE

Delta Force's first mission, the 1980 'Operation Eagle Claw' to rescue the hostages being held in Tehran, ended in disaster when two aircraft collided at Desert One base. Missions in Grenada and Panama followed, before Delta joined the 'Scud Hunt' in 1991 in the Iraqi desert, tracking and destroying mobile ballistic missile launchers.

In 1993, Delta deployed as part of Task Force Ranger and participated in the infamous Battle of Mogadishu. At the same time, Delta operators were assisting Colombian forces in the hunt for Pablo Escobar. The late 1990s saw the unit operating in the Balkans, targeting war criminals for capture.

"DELTA WERE GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY FOR ELIMINATING THE LEADERS AND BOMB-MAKERS OF AL-QAEDA IN IRAQ"

Men of Delta Force fast-rope out of a Black Hawk in Syria, May 2015

Delta operators were among the first into Afghanistan after 9/11 and came frustratingly close to capturing or killing Osama bin Laden at Tora Bora. As the insurgency boiled to the surface following the US-led invasion of Iraq, Delta was given responsibility for eliminating the leaders and bomb-makers of Al-Qaeda in Iraq and later conducted kill or capture missions in eastern Afghanistan.

Today, the unit operates globally but has most recently been seen in action in Syria, where it was involved in successfully defending a US patrol base attacked by jihadists and Russian mercenaries in February 2018.

to the ground as the first Ranger squad, on foot from the target building, rounded the corner and began to establish defensive positions around Super 61.

Moments later, disaster struck once more, as Moser describes: “I heard something odd and looked skyward to see a Black Hawk fly over us at approximately 75-100 feet (23-30 metres) above ground level. The tail rotor had been damaged and the fin was dangling. The bird remained airborne and continued in the direction of the airport beyond my sight.”

Another Black Hawk, with the callsign Super 64, had been hit by an RPG, and it crashed southwest of the target building. With the CSAR team already committed and Somalis surrounding the second crash site, a pair of Delta snipers overhead in another Black Hawk – Master Sergeant Gary Gordon and Sergeant First Class Randall Shughart – volunteered to be inserted. The two snipers bravely held off the Somalis for some 20 minutes, until Gordon was shot and killed.

Hooten remembers with sadness: “I remember when I was going towards the first crash site, I got this phantom call from Randy Shughart, and he was like, ‘Where you guys at?’ and I said, ‘We’re on our way to the crash site.’ [Shughart said] ‘How long you going to be before you get here?’ I said, ‘Hopefully five minutes.’ I didn’t know about the other crash site, we didn’t know that another bird had gone down.” Moments later, Shughart was shot and killed and the Somalis swarmed the helicopter, capturing a pilot, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Mike Durant, and mutilating the bodies of the aircrew and its Delta defenders.

160th Special Operations Aviation Squadron Black Hawk Super 65, piloted by CWO Gerry Izzo, on an earlier mission over Mogadishu

The Super 61 crash site was finally secured as the Sun went down but continued to be under attack all night as the task force worked to free the body of Chief Warrant Officer Class 3 Cliff Wolcott, trapped in the wreckage. “We got what we could of the body out and at that point the Sun was coming up. I remember being in the aircraft and seeing the sky starting to turn – it added to the sense of urgency,” recalls Hooten.

“THE TWO SNIPERS BRAVELY HELD OFF THE SOMALIS FOR SOME 20 MINUTES UNTIL GORDON WAS SHOT AND KILLED”

With Wolcott recovered, the task force finally departed in a joint US and UN convoy including armoured vehicles. As the vehicles were fully loaded, some men were forced to endure the ‘Mogadishu Mile’, running out of the city until they were eventually picked up by Ranger Humvees. “I can distinctly remember being in a gunfight and then being in a friendly neighbourhood where everyone was cheering for us. It was like crossing a line – from running down the street shooting at every intersection and then linking up with 10th Mountain and into an area where all the Somalis are on the side of the road cheering – it was just surreal” remembers Hooten.

Task Force Ranger had suffered 16 killed – five from Delta, five from the 160th SOAR, and six from the Rangers – and an incredible 83 wounded. A sixth Delta operator would be tragically killed days later by a mortar strike at their airfield base.

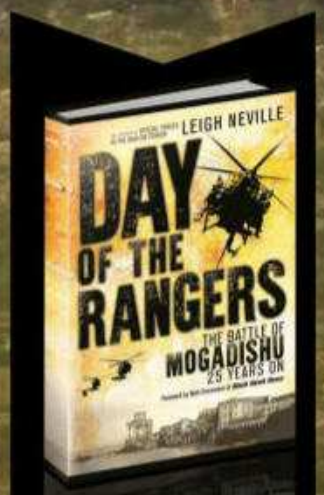
B-Company Rangers depart Mogadishu after the 3 October mission. They were briefly replaced by A-Company, but no further missions were launched

Images: Alamy, Getty, Paul Leonard, Michael Moser, Leigh Neville

President Bill Clinton presents Master Sergeant Gary Gordon's Medal of Honor to his widow Carmen

A US helicopter flies over Mogadishu during Operation Restore Hope in 1992, when the US assumed unified command of the UN operations

"AS THE VEHICLES WERE FULLY LOADED, SOME MEN WERE FORCED TO ENDURE THE 'MOGADISHU MILE', RUNNING OUT OF THE CITY UNTIL THEY WERE EVENTUALLY PICKED UP BY RANGER HUMVEES"



***Day Of The Rangers: The Battle Of Mogadishu 25 Years On* by Leigh Neville is published by Osprey Books.**

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THE THIRD REICH IN PHOTOS

EASTERN FRONT IN FLAMES 1942-1943

WORDS **PAUL GARSON**

AS THE TIDE OF WAR TURNED, THE SOVIET FRONT BECAME SYNONYMOUS WITH DEATH

"BETWEEN NOVOROSSIYSK AND TUAPSE"

29 OCTOBER 1942

The cover of the *Cologne Illustrated* Newspaper spotlights a mass of Russian POWs led by a single German soldier, pipe in mouth, thereby trumpeting the Wehrmacht's Eastern Front victories – in this case on a dusty road near two important Black Sea ports.

Most of Novorossiysk was occupied by German and Romanian troops on 10 September 1942. However, the strategic bay was defended for 225 days by a small Soviet naval unit until it was liberated in September 1943. The Axis was therefore never allowed access to the port for the transport of supplies.

Hitler fanatically believed that after Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union the Communist monolith would collapse like a house of cards when confronted by the invincibility of Nazi ideology and military technology. While some of his high command had their doubts about attacking such a vast country, and remembering Napoleon's catastrophic attempt previously, Hitler held sway, and on the morning of 22 June 1941, he sent millions of Axis troops across the border, intent on bursting Stalin's bubble of security – an illusion previously imagined because of his non-aggression pact with Germany.

Initially, Hitler could dance one of his victory jigs as vast swathes of Russian territory were overrun and hundreds of thousands of Red Army troops killed or captured. The 'house of cards' was indeed shaken, some outlying structures fell, but time, the weather, the great expanse of land, diminishing resources and, most importantly, the stamina, resilience and courage of the Russian peoples shored up the structure, turning the tide against the invaders.

Another major factor was the influx of material support by the Allies, including 30 per cent of the USSR's military aircraft and 58 per cent of the high-octane aviation fuel, as well as 33 per cent of its motor vehicles and 93 per cent of railway equipment. It would still take a scorched earth policy and the deaths of millions, but the Soviet house stood firm.

Soon a shadow began to fall over Germany. On 14 October a flight of 291 American B-17E 'Flying Fortresses' destroyed the ball-bearing factories in Schweinfurt – a sign of things to come. Later that month British forces turned the tables on Rommel, defeating the Afrika Korps at El Alamein.

In early November a Russian counterattack threatened to encircle the vaunted Sixth Army, but Hitler refused to allow a withdrawal and later, as matters worsened, denied a break-out, sealing the fate of 300,000 troops, including Romanian and Italian allies. Facing not only determined Russian attacks, the Axis forces also grappled with -40 degrees Celsius.

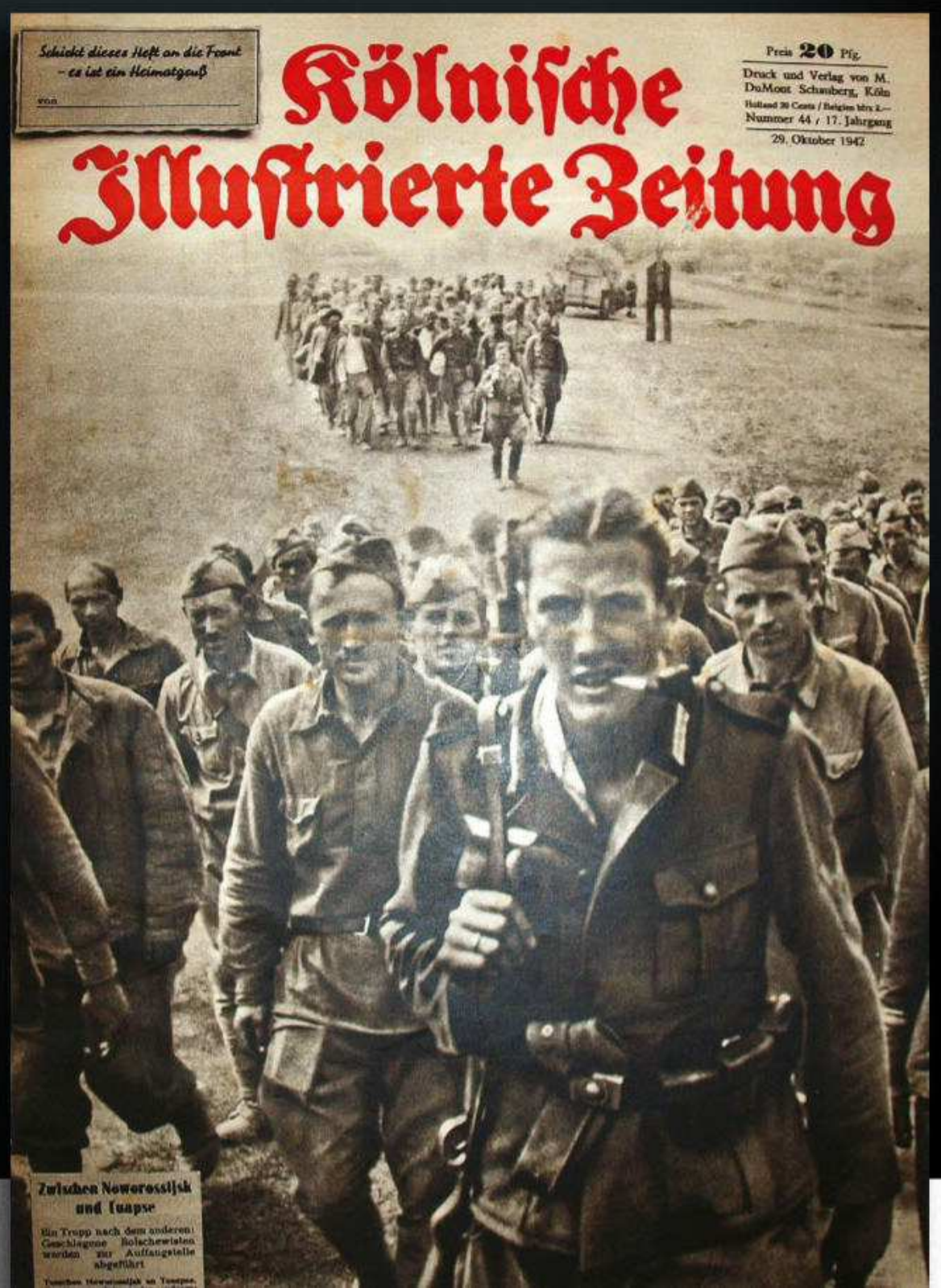
The beginning of 1943 found German troops forced to withdraw from the Caucasus and its oil reserves. On 2 February, the Sixth Army surrendered to Soviet forces, and over 90,000 soldiers became POWs. Only 5,000 would ever return to Germany.

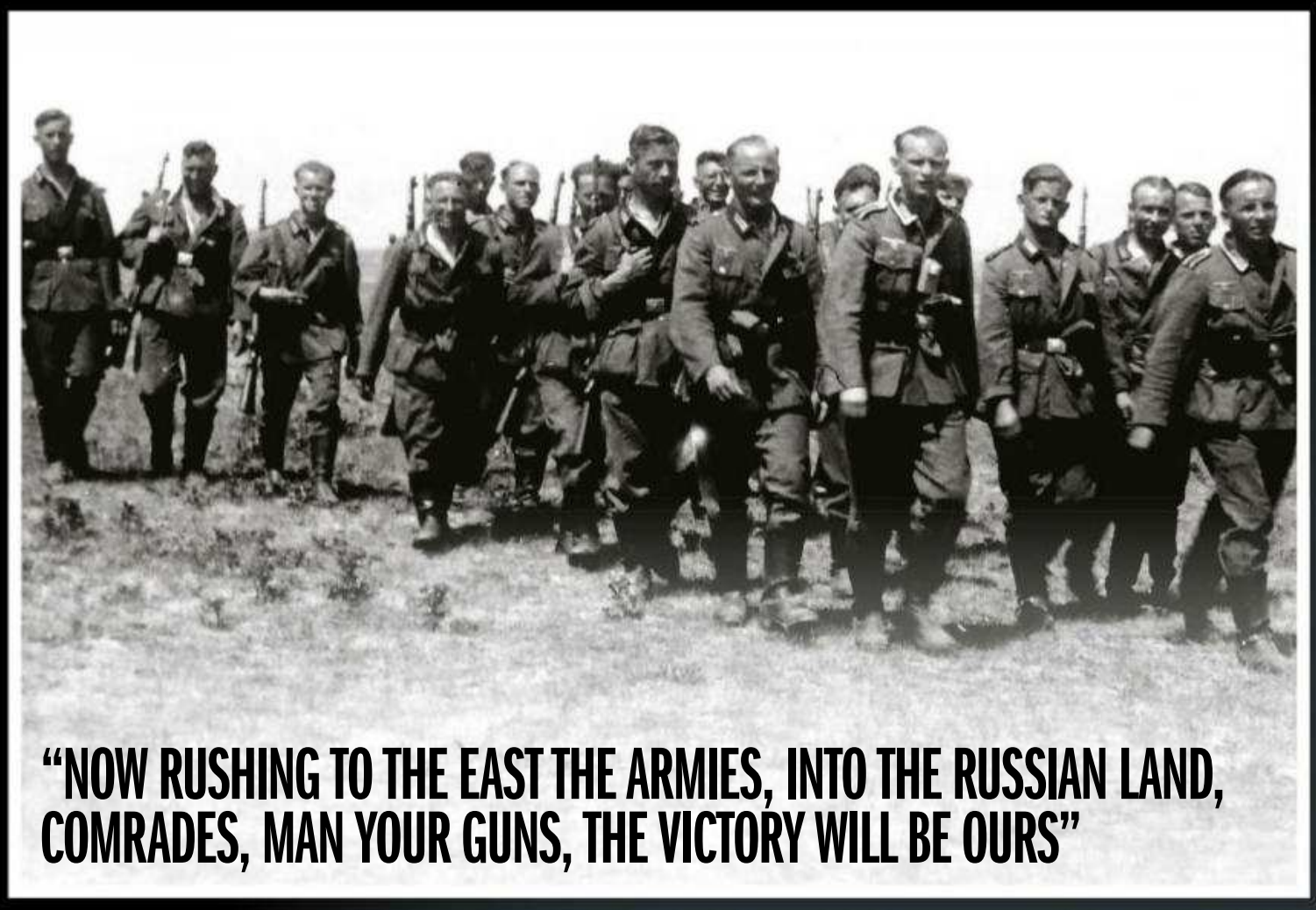
May 1943 featured 150,000 Germans and Italians surrendering to the Allies in Tunisia. The summer also saw ever-increasing losses of German U-boats during the Atlantic Sea war, and eventually 90 per cent of German submariners were lost. In July a titanic tank battle was fought at Kursk, and would be the Wehrmacht's last offensive action of the war on the Eastern Front. Then, on 10 July, combined Anglo-American forces landed in Sicily, beginning the Allied climb up the Italian 'boot', led by British General Montgomery's Eighth Army and American General Patton's Seventh Army.

Cracks in the Axis wall widened when Mussolini was 'dismissed' from power by his own government. It prompted Hitler to withdraw much-needed elite forces from Kursk and send them to Italy, where they could take over much of the country, disarming its military, killing thousands of Italian soldiers and sending thousands more into slave labour.

As 1943 ground to an end, the German military juggernaut was bogged down as fuel supplies dried up, and tank and aircraft losses escalated along with troop casualties. The home front was also in flames under relentless Allied saturation bombing. The term 'Eastern Front' had, for the German soldier and his civilian family, become synonymous with death. Axis casualties for 1943 are estimated at over 1.6 million, Soviet casualties at nearly 8 million.

"OVER 90,000 SOLDIERS BECAME POWS. ONLY 5,000 WOULD EVER RETURN TO GERMANY"





HUNTING PARTY

Having removed their steel helmets in the Russian summer heat, 20 German soldiers trudge across the vast countryside. A popular marching song, *Forwards to the East*, went:

"We stood on guard for Germany
And joined the great awakening,
Now the sun rises in the East
And calls the millions to battle.

"From Finland to the Black Sea,
Forward, forward
Forward to the East you storming army.
Freedom is the goal,
Victory is the glory,
As the Führer commands
We follow you.

"The march started by Horst Wessel,
In the blazing might of the SA
Complete the grey columns
The Great Hour is here.

"Now rushing to the East the Armies
Into the Russian land,
Comrades, man your guns
The victory will be ours."

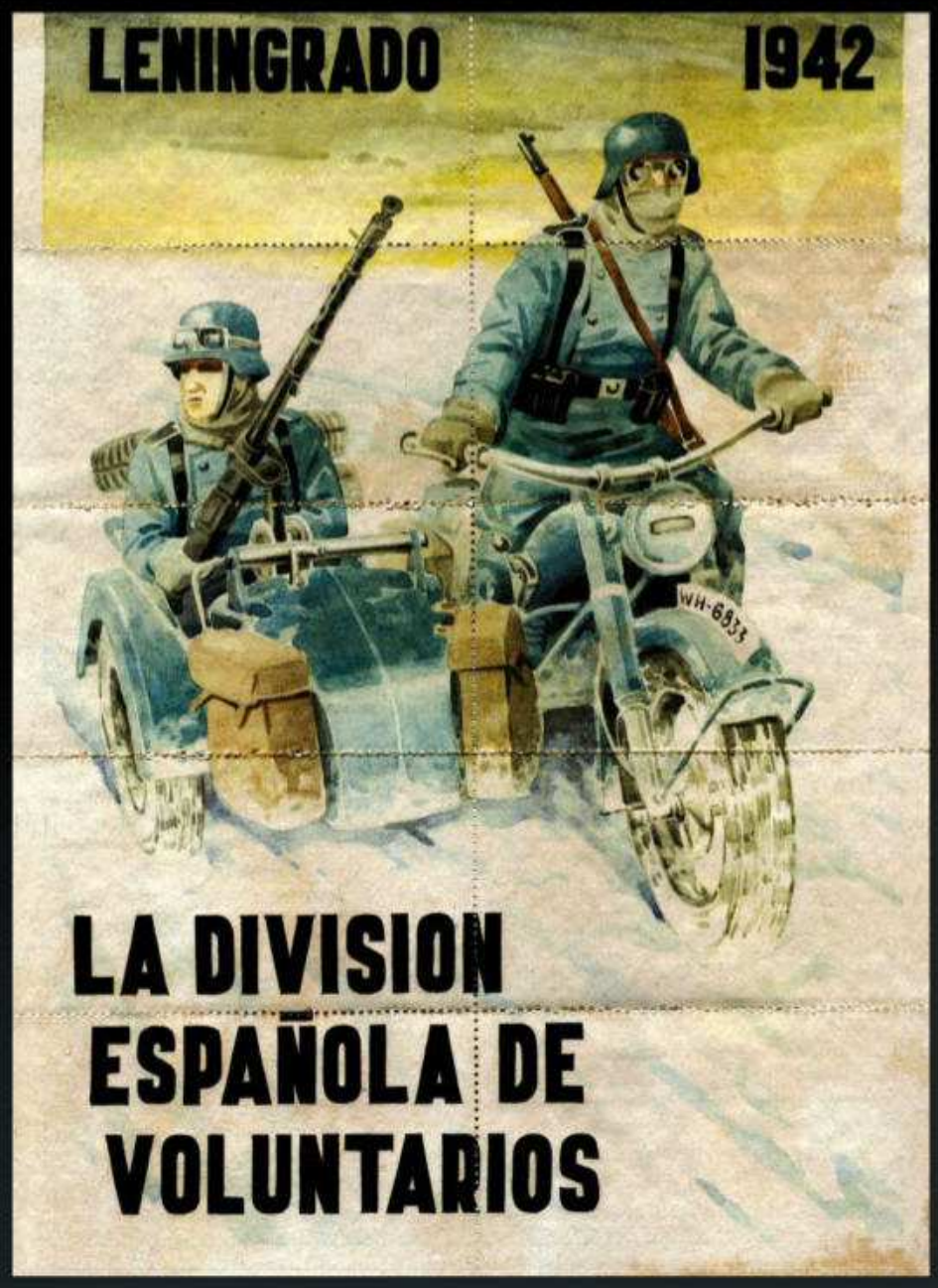
"NOW RUSHING TO THE EAST THE ARMIES, INTO THE RUSSIAN LAND, COMRADES, MAN YOUR GUNS, THE VICTORY WILL BE OURS"

BATTLEFRONT FATIGUE

A German trooper slumps over his bicycle as his comrades attempt to move a heavy artillery piece rolling on steel wheels during a Russian river crossing – one of hundreds encountered, along with swamps, bogs and streams. These barriers slowed their advance across the USSR.

LETHAL LEGENDS

Rated as the top German sniper, Austrian Matthäus Hetzenauer counted 345 kills, one supposedly at 1,100 metres. But it was the Soviets who trained the largest number of snipers – over 425,000, including 55,000 women – taking a toll on thousands of German personnel. Several Soviet top guns scored over 400 kills, with many of their targets enemy snipers. The most famous marksman with deadly accuracy was a Finn, Simo Häyhä, who had 542 confirmed kills between 1939-40. Moreover, he did not rely on using a telescopic sight.



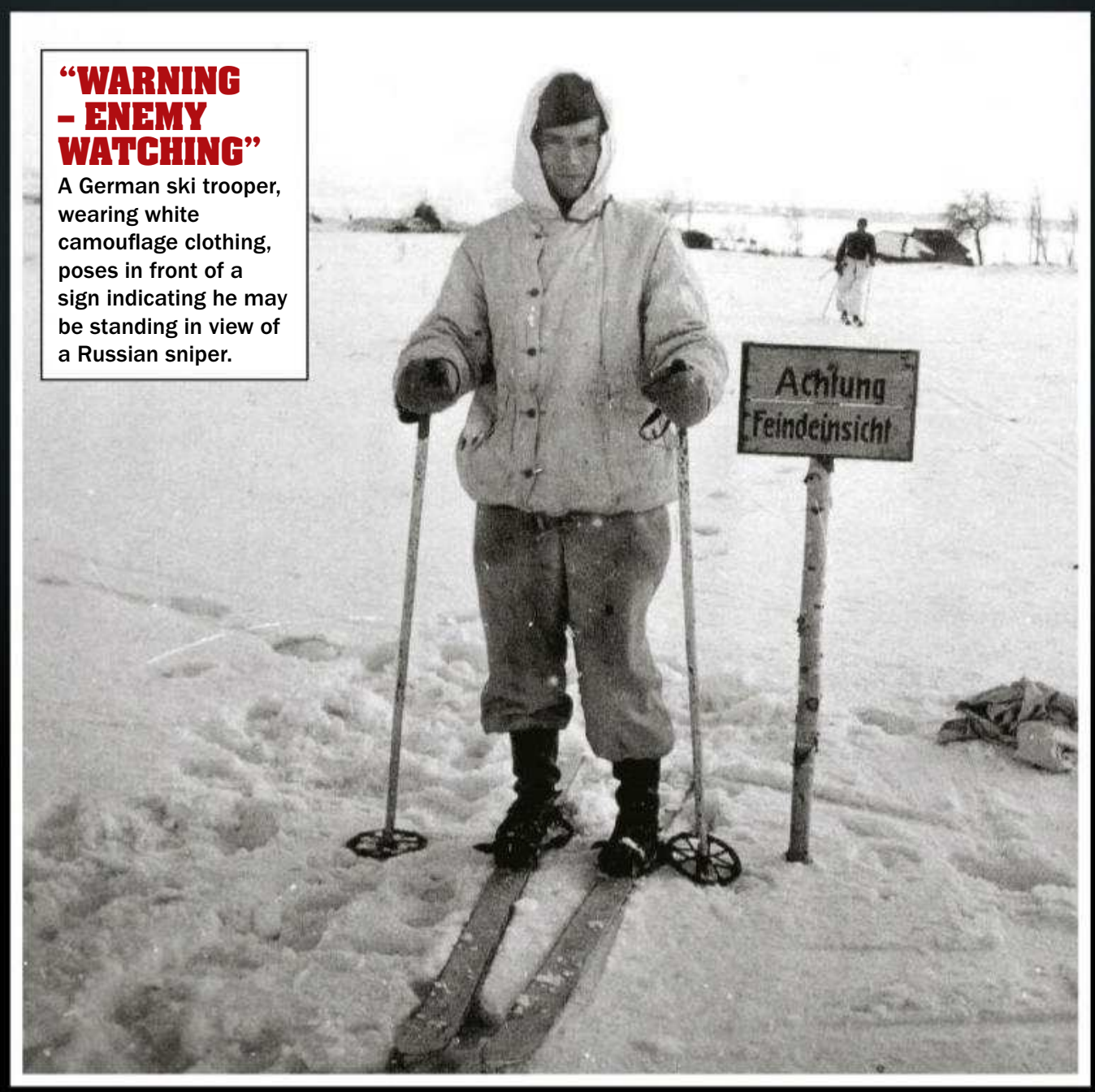
SPANISH VOLUNTEERS ON THE EASTERN FRONT

Fascist dictator Franco, previously aided by Nazi Germany in its Spanish Civil War victory, reciprocated by sending 'anti-communist' volunteer troops of the 'Blue Division'. The division fought at Leningrad, repulsing a Soviet counterattack seven times its number. Held in high praise by Hitler, their motto was 'No possible relief, until extinction'. The siege of Leningrad would last 900 days. German casualties totalled nearly 600,000. Russian casualties were nearly 3.5 million, including 1 million civilian deaths.

"THEIR MOTTO WAS 'NO POSSIBLE RELIEF, UNTIL EXTINCTION'"

"WARNING – ENEMY WATCHING"

A German ski trooper, wearing white camouflage clothing, poses in front of a sign indicating he may be standing in view of a Russian sniper.



WALKING WOUNDED ON THE EASTERN FRONT

German medics seem taken aback after removing a bandage from a Russian POW. As the brutal war of annihilation intensified, both sides often murdered the enemy wounded when they were found in field hospitals, as were the medical staff.

THE INFERNO OF STALINGRAD

A German camera captures the bombardment of the city named for the USSR's dictator, thus making it Hitler's priority for capture and destruction.

"AS THE BRUTAL WAR OF ANNIHILATION INTENSIFIED, BOTH SIDES OFTEN MURDERED THE ENEMY WOUNDED WHEN THEY WERE FOUND IN FIELD HOSPITALS"

WINTER SPORT

German soldiers, bundled in their summer uniforms, put on a good show for the camera. The Russian winter, with its -40 degrees Celsius temperatures and 1.83-metre (six-feet) snow drifts, would freeze motor oil solid in vehicles and lubricants in gun barrels. 'General Winter' would also bury thousands in a white shroud, with over 30 per cent of German deaths on the Eastern Front caused by the freezing weather.

"'GENERAL WINTER' WOULD ALSO BURY THOUSANDS IN A WHITE SHROUD, 30 PER CENT OF GERMAN DEATHS ON THE EASTERN FRONT CAUSED BY THE FREEZING WEATHER"

BUNKER

German troops often constructed elaborate underground bunkers in an effort to withstand enemy bombardment. Digging through the frozen winter soil often resulted in more primitive foxholes.

"GÖRING'S PROMISE TO AIRLIFT MUCH-NEEDED SUPPLIES TO THE BELEAGUERED SIXTH ARMY AT STALINGRAD FELL FAR SHORT"

WHITE SHEETS

A Luftwaffe airman seeks a few moments of sleep in a bed of Russian snow. Göring's promise to airlift much-needed supplies to the beleaguered Sixth Army at Stalingrad fell far short.

FOREST OF THE DEAD

Crosses, with names inscribed, wait for their addition to the vast cemetery growing somewhere on the Eastern Front. Local Birchwood has been used for its gatepost. Many similar graveyards populate the Russian countryside. Red Army tanks, when encountering them, often ground over them, obliterating any evidence of the hated enemy.

NORWAY COMMANDO

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES 'SONNY' WRIGHT

Wright returned to Leros in September 2013 to mark the 70th anniversary of the sinking of the Greek destroyer Vasilissa Olga during the 1943 battle

WORDS **TOM GARNER**

This veteran served as a saboteur & medic during the closing stages of the Norwegian Campaign, before continuing the fight in Malta & Greece

The British commandos became famous during WWII for daring raids behind enemy lines, and their units served in all theatres of the war across the globe. What is less well known is that the commandos were first formed in June 1940 from volunteers who had recently fought in Norway using guerrilla-style tactics. These men formed 'Independent Companies', and one of these innovative early commandos was a combat medic called Charles Wright.

Known to everyone as 'Sonny', Wright volunteered for the Independent Companies in secret and survived a gruelling mission in northern Norway to try to hold back the German invasion. After being evacuated, Wright went on to serve across the Mediterranean, and continually survived intense situations to fight another day. His story is a tale of courage, perseverance and the ability to laugh in the face of danger.

A 1930s territorial

Born in Suffolk in 1921, Wright's father was a reservist in the British Territorial Army, and he allowed his young son to accompany him. "My father had been in the TA and I knew all the senior NCOs and officers. I used to camp with them and my father when I was seven! When I first joined everything was in tents and carried in horses and carts."

When Wright officially joined the TA he lied about his age to get in, but his youth did not bother his commanders. "I joined when I was 15 in 1936 but put my age up to 17. They all knew me and my real age but that was it, I was in." Wright recalls that the reservists were "really well trained" and that he was required to act as a "handyman doing all the work, but I didn't care".

When war broke out in September 1939, Wright was immediately called up, and although he had trained as a carpenter he was assigned to the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC). Wright trained as a medical orderly and learned about anatomy and physiology with experienced medics, including a renowned surgeon called Dr. Bell-Jones: "He was known all over England and everybody was scared of him, but he was the best chap I ever worked with."

The intensity of Wright's medical training was highlighted when the Dutch liner SS Simon Bolivar struck a mine in the North Sea off Felixstowe in November 1939, with the loss of 120 lives. Wright recalls tending to the survivors: "It was sunk with women and children on board. I was sent up to the hospital, and we had a lot of fractures. Dr. Bell-Jones would take extensions of a broken arm for example, and I would plaster it. When the next patient came along I'd have to reverse everything."

Despite this crash course, Wright could not have foreseen that his training would be utilised for active service behind enemy lines.

Independent Companies

In 1940 Wright was posted with his RAMC unit to Belford Hall in Northumberland and went out one evening to the local town. "A van came down the road with the RSM shouting my name out. I was told to report to the CO's office immediately. I thought, 'What have I done now?'"

When Wright met his commanding officer he was given classified information. "I thought something was wrong, but he said to me, 'What I'm going to tell you is strictly between you and I. You can't even tell your mother.' He then told me all the details about a special unit that was being formed by Churchill. He was at that point first lord of the Admiralty and had been in the Boer War, where he had fought commandos. He knew how they attacked, and they had been so successful that he thought we should have similar people who would do the dirty work. That was the idea."

Wright was offered the chance to volunteer for this new unit to fight in Norway, although he was given no illusions about the dangers: "They wanted medical cover and told me, 'You don't have to go. Nobody is saying you have to volunteer because there's no chance of coming out.'"

The outfit that Wright joined was one of ten units that became known as 'Independent Companies'. Raised in April 1940, the companies consisted of volunteers who were serving in the Territorial Army, and they were designed to be light, mobile guerrilla soldiers. The Germans had invaded Norway on 9 April 1940 and faced the Norwegian army and an Allied expeditionary force. German troops landed along the Norwegian coast from Oslo to Narvik, and their superior airpower meant that the Allies were in great danger.

Like elsewhere in Europe, the speed of the German invasion took the Allies by surprise, especially the British, who had been making plans in Norway to support Finland during the Winter War. Wright explains, "At the time we were supposed to get to the Finns because they were fighting the Russians. We were a demolition company and had to blow a railway. They all had white uniforms, but before we got there the Russians had packed up because the Germans were coming in the other way. Our plan was to land at Bodø in Norway and march across."

This rapid change in strategy meant that the British had to rethink their operations in Norway. The formation of the Independent Companies was a hasty decision by planning

OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP-LEFT:

- Wright spent weeks at Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp. Its entrance was unnervingly grand, with a large metal eagle over the gate and flagpoles

- British soldiers have their rifles inspected by a Norwegian soldier at Skage after marching 90 kilometres (56 miles) across mountains to avoid capture, April 1940

- A picture of Sonny Wright taken during the war. He began his military service as an underage TA reservist but rose to become a senior NCO in the RAMC

- HMT Lancastria sinks off Saint-Nazaire in the worst maritime disaster in British history, 17 June 1940. Wright sailed on her penultimate voyage only days before

- Sonny Wright pictured after the war in the dress uniform of a warrant officer (senior NCO) in the Royal Army Medical Corps

- German soldiers climb a steep road near Bagn, 158 kilometres (98 miles) northwest of Oslo, April 1940

- German soldiers stand on a bridge that has been partially demolished by the British at Pothus, 25 May 1940. The Independent Companies were tasked with destroying bridges and railways

- A picture of Wright in uniform taken on an unknown date during World War II

Wright's medal states in Norwegian, "Norway Thanks You For Your Efforts 1939-45"

staff to conduct raids against the Germans in Nordland. This was despite the fact that well-equipped divisions, artillery and air cover could have adequately defended the Norwegian county.

As it was, the first five companies were sent to Norway. Wright was assigned to No. 3 Independent Company and recalls that the training he received was inadequate and rushed: "There were two medics, including myself, a couple of Royal Engineers, and the rest were infantry. We had one day's training. They asked me if I'd used a rifle and I said I hadn't, so I borrowed somebody else's!"

During preparations, expertise appeared to count for less than physical fitness. "When we were still in England we were presented with different men from the 54th (East Anglian) Division. Churchill wanted specialists but you all had to be sportsmen. For example, the men from the Essex Regiment had a majority of boxers. They were champions so everybody had to be fit, that's all the people were concerned about. All the men that were there were of different grades, including crooks!"

Despite the minimal training, the Independent Companies still demanded the performance expected of future commandos. "We knew exactly what we were going to do. When we got to Norway we had to forget to be human beings, live off the land, murder and be tough. You had to survive."

Action in Nordland

Wright sailed to Norway in May 1940 with five Independent Companies under the codename 'Scissors Force' to join the British Expeditionary Force. It was an uncomfortable voyage. "Everything we did was secret so we went over on an old cattle boat that they didn't bother to clean out. Our first meal on board was army biscuits from the First World War! They were dated from 1914-17. The tinned food was the same. People moaned and nobody wanted to eat it. Some ate it but I couldn't."

After landing at Bodø, two officers from No. 3 Company searched for a boat to take them up the local fjord. "While we were waiting I thought I'd have a swim, but I wasn't in the water long! They found a German whaler with a Norwegian skipper and a harpoon. They gave him whiskey or rum and got him to take us around. We were breaking ice all the way there. This was at night, there was no sun but it was still light. We landed at the jetty, and that was when the fun started."

"WHEN WE GOT TO NORWAY WE HAD TO FORGET TO BE HUMAN BEINGS, LIVE OFF THE LAND, MURDER AND BE TOUGH. YOU HAD TO SURVIVE"

The "fun" was actually the beginning of a chaotic operation. No. 3 Company's mission was to blow up railways, bridges and installations to slow the German advance, but as Wright explains, "That was the idea, but the Germans would attack too fast for us. They had the equipment but we didn't even have a car. Everything was done on foot, and we had to get things by pinching them. We did blow up some bridges but not to a great extent. If anything, we blew up more railways. The idea was to destroy them because there was a worry about the Germans and Russians getting iron."

The fighting conditions were grim: "We were machine gunned all the time because we hadn't got any air cover at all. The German aircraft would come in low, and when we were north of Bodø the snow was six to seven feet (1.83-2.13 metres) high. The road went through where the Norwegians banked the snow up on either side. One plane came over and someone

The German cruiser Admiral Hipper lands troops at Trondheim. This ship was the only German heavy cruiser that was active in landing soldiers in Norway

THE NORWEGIAN CAMPAIGN

THE INVASION OF NORWAY RESULTED IN THE OCCUPATION OF THE SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRY AND INADVERTENTLY PROPELLED WINSTON CHURCHILL TO POWER

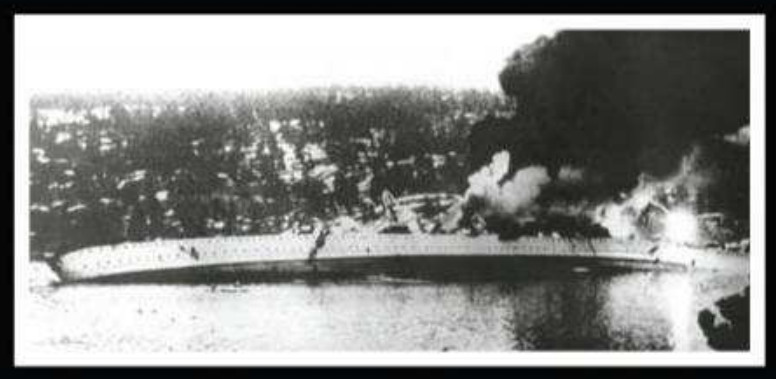
In 1940 Norway was a neutral country, but Grand Admiral Erich Raeder wanted to seize Norwegian naval bases to provide Germany with key strategic positions to operate from, primarily against the Royal Navy.

After the British seized the German tanker Altmark in Norwegian waters, Adolf Hitler became determined to deny the British access to Norway and an invasion was planned. German divisions were raised on 7 April 1940 and invaded Denmark to provide a land route to Norway. Denmark surrendered within two days, but Norway resisted and sunk the German cruiser Blücher near Oslo. The Norwegian army prepared to face northern and coastal attacks and an Allied expeditionary force of 12,000 British, French and Polish troops was dispatched.

The campaign was chaotic. The British retreated from Gudbrandsdal, but the Germans lost two naval battles at Narvik, where their troops came under siege. Nevertheless, the invasion generally went to plan and German air superiority was decisive against the Royal Navy, which had a lack of radar control and high-quality fighter aircraft.

The Allied expeditionary force was compelled to evacuate following the invasion of France, and Norway remained occupied until 1945. Ironically, one of the few Allied beneficiaries of the invasion was Winston Churchill. As first lord of the Admiralty, Churchill had been responsible for many mistakes during the campaign. Nevertheless, when Neville Chamberlain was ousted from office following the failure in Norway, it was Churchill who succeeded him as prime minister.

“DENMARK SURRENDERED WITHIN TWO DAYS, BUT NORWAY RESISTED AND SUNK THE GERMAN CRUISER BLÜCHER”



The German cruiser Blücher lists heavily to port after being hit by cannon fire and torpedoes from Norwegian coastal defences

German troops enter Oslo on the first day of the invasion of Norway. They would occupy the country for five years

German infantrymen hurriedly attack and advance through a burning Norwegian village

commandeered a bus to see what was happening. The plane machine gunned it. The driver (Private Raymond Bixby) was killed, and I had to bury him on my own under three to four feet (0.91-1.22 metres) of snow.”

On another occasion Wright himself was attacked by a German aircraft in a Norwegian town. “There was a wooden shop on a corner and this plane came from behind me and started firing. I tried to get into the shop and the door was open. I thought I’d go right through the other end but it caught fire. When I ran out, I saw the counter was full of liquorice. I took a handful but when I ate it, it was tobacco!”

After exiting the shop, the German plane continued to pursue Wright. “I was lucky that day. I got into a thick wood and chucked my rifle down by the side of a tree. The aircraft came round and fired, and when I retrieved my rifle it was smashed up with bullets. Its magazine had been full but, oddly, it hadn’t exploded.”

Wright’s struggle with the aircraft was so close that he almost locked eyes with the pilot. “I saw the plane afterwards but he didn’t see me. He went over, came back and went over again. It was quiet for a few minutes and there was a sharp slope downwards. Our stores were over the other way and I had to get across a field. I managed to get into another wood. This plane came over and came down over the short trees. I looked him in the eyes but he was looking over my head. I can see him now, and if I’d had a rifle I would have been dead. He was very close. We were almost level with each other.”

These encounters with the Germans were compounded by poor equipment. “The weather wasn’t bad but we had too much gear. We had a big double sleeping bag, leather coats, warm underpants, and you couldn’t carry it. We were also equipped with boots three times too big and three pairs of greased socks. They started up your calves, but by the time we got back they were below the boots.”

Although he was a medic, Wright rarely treated his comrades. “I would help carry the explosives, and if anybody blew themselves up I would look at them, bring them out of trees etc. However, I didn’t have to treat many people, they were pretty lucky.”

Like the rest of the British Expeditionary Force, No. 3 Company’s priority eventually became escaping Norway. Its operational route through Nordland to Narvik and back to Bodø was drawn out and required improvisation. “We had to walk about 300 miles (480 kilometres). We confiscated a bicycle, and to get from one place to another we had to take turns on it!”

Once the company arrived in Bodø, they discovered that it was almost destroyed following a Luftwaffe attack. “When we arrived it was all on fire, and we had to run through the flames. There were two destroyers near the jetty, which was on fire. You had to run, jump on the boat and chuck your rifle into the side. They gave us a tin of something mucky and put us down the forward hold to take us to the northern Norwegian islands. However, we didn’t know which ones because it was a secret.”

Now safely on board, Wright and his comrades were given some much-needed refreshments. “We were with the navy now and I got a bottle of Guinness, but I didn’t drink so I gave it away. It was a luxury to those people and we chucked our rifles to one side.”

After around five days No. 3 Company was transferred and taken to Scotland aboard HMT Lancastria. It proved to be her penultimate voyage. The former Cunard liner had been converted into a troopship but would soon meet a tragic end. “The Lancastria was luxurious. She took us to Scotland and went straight from there down to France, where a bomb went down the chimneystack and went off. We had gotten off on the trip before so we were lucky.”

Wright was indeed very fortunate. HMT Lancastria was sunk off Saint-Nazaire with the

loss of around 4,000 lives. This was the largest single-ship loss of life in British maritime history and claimed more fatalities than the RMS Titanic and RMS Lusitania combined.

For the British, the campaign in Norway was a dismal fiasco, but the Independent Companies had germinated the idea for more units suited to destructive raiding operations. Most of the companies went back to their original regiments, but No. 11 Company was created after the disbandment. It was formed of volunteers from the original companies and reorganised into the first official commando unit, which took part in 'Operation Collar' in June 1940. Wright returned to the RAMC, but his war was just beginning.

Battle of Britain

After arriving in Scotland, Wright was deployed to England's southern coast for the Battle of Britain and travelled down on the Flying Scotsman. While he was sailing to the Isle of Wight, Wright was almost killed by a crashing German aircraft: "We crossed the Solent in a small boat and a plane came right over the top of us. Behind it were two Hurricanes giving it a blast before they pulled away. A destroyer in Ryde harbour also fired with a Bofors. The plane hit the water about 200 yards (180 metres) from us. It was very close, I thought it would kill us when it came over our heads."

Having survived this close encounter, Wright was quartered in Ryde near Osborne House.

"A LUMP OF SHRAPNEL HIT HIM IN THE HEAD, AND I HAD THE JOB OF TIPPING HIM OVER THE SIDE. IT WAS THE DAY BEFORE MY 21ST BIRTHDAY"

While he was there he met the British actor David Niven, who had returned from Hollywood to serve as an army officer. "He was in one of our companies. He was an alright guy and would talk to you. He came round our quarters and looked at a photograph of mine. He said, 'Who's this?' and I said, 'She's my girlfriend.' He replied, 'She's not so bad, I'll take this!' He was a major shortly afterwards."

Wright was then posted to Dungeness on the Kent coast and accidentally shot down two British aircraft. "There was a big bay into Dover and we kept telling pilots to fly in the middle so we could see them properly. However, a Hurricane flew over only 100 feet (30 metres) from the ground. We couldn't tell what he was and we'd been machine gunned so many times that we opened fire on him. He came down and managed to land because we'd only ripped the undercarriage up. He was a Polish pilot. The next one was a bigger British plane that we shot down. Luckily nobody was hurt."

Malta and Leros

In late 1940 Wright was redeployed overseas, this time to the Mediterranean. He sailed through Gibraltar on the SS Empire Song, which was attacked by German dive-bombers on 10 January 1941. "I was outside and shrapnel was coming down everywhere. My friend Ken Simper got killed at the back of the bulkhead. A lump of shrapnel hit him in the head, and I had the job of tipping him over the side. It was the day before my 21st birthday."

After sailing to Greece, Wright was sent to Malta about six months after the infamous siege began. Then a British colony, the strategically important island was continually attacked by Axis forces for almost two and half years between 1940-42. Malta became one of the most intensively bombed areas of the war until the siege was lifted in November 1942, and Wright served on the island for the majority of that time.

While attending to his medical duties, he witnessed the destruction the daily bombings caused to the Maltese people and Allied personnel: "There was bombing every day, and I was treating wounded patients. Sometimes you'd come rushing in [to hospital]. One day we must have had 200 casualties and there were only six of us medics then. One chap came in and said, 'Come quickly, my friend's head has fallen off!' Things like that happened, and I said, 'Where do you want me to start on him?' That's how you'd have to be, you'd cope with gallows humour."

Maltese civilians and Allied personnel clear up debris after a bombing raid on Valetta's main street during the Siege of Malta

“‘COME QUICKLY, MY FRIEND’S HEAD HAS FALLEN OFF!’ THINGS LIKE THAT HAPPENED, AND I SAID, ‘WHERE DO YOU WANT ME TO START ON HIM?’ THAT’S HOW YOU’D HAVE TO BE, YOU’D COPE WITH GALLOWS HUMOUR”

The burning aftermath of a German bombing raid over Voss, western Norway. The Germans’ air superiority was a critical factor in their successful invasion

BATTLE OF LEROS

SONNY WRIGHT WAS CAPTURED ON AN ITALIAN-OCCUPIED GREEK ISLAND, DURING A BATTLE THAT WAS WON BY GERMAN PARATROOPERS

Leros is part of the Dodecanese Islands in the Aegean Sea, and they had been occupied by Italy since 1912. After the fall of Greece in 1941, the islands were garrisoned by Italian and German troops, but when Italy surrendered in 1943, it joined the Allies. The islands became open to the Allied forces and thousands of troops, many of them British, occupied Leros in conjunction with the Italians.

The island had a steep, rocky coastline and considerable artillery infrastructure, which made it more formidable than nearby Kos and Samos. However, Leros had poor anti-aircraft defences, and Greek and British ships were sunk in Lakki harbour in September 1943. The Germans then planned an invasion mission called ‘Operation Taifun’ (Typhoon).

After overrunning Kos, Leros was subjected to weeks of aerial bombardment, before hundreds of German paratroopers launched a series of landings at different locations. The Allied defenders struggled to implement a focused defence, with vicious hand-to-hand fighting occurring in places, and the British-led defenders were forced to surrender on 16 November. For just over 1,000 German casualties, the Allies lost four destroyers, 115 RAF aircraft, over 900 fatalities and 8,550 captured POWs, 5,350 of which were Italian.

German paratroopers prepare to board a Junkers Ju 82 transport plane to be flown to Leros, 1943. Their victory on the Greek island was similar in execution to the Battle of Crete in 1941

After the siege was over, Wright was sent to Greece in 1943 and was transported via Tobruk, Alexandria, the Sinai Desert and Palestine. After he arrived on the Greek island of Leros, German forces attacked.

In a battle characterised by mass drops of German paratroopers, Wright climbed up to some caves and observed the battle from a high vantage point. "I had to go out and get some blankets. We were up top in some caves, which were also Italian ammunition dumps. There were planes coming over the top and there must have been about 50 German planes shot down by machine guns."

Although the Germans would win, they met stiff resistance. "When the Germans came in there were about 100 paratroopers killed. I was looking down at the port when they were coming. I thought there were speedboats racing in, but they were aircraft and I was above them. When they parachuted they were open targets for the Bren guns. However, when I went down to the wharf the battle had finished because they had run out of ammunition."

Wright was captured with thousands of other Allied troops, although he was immediately kept busy tending to the wounded of both sides. "I didn't worry [about being captured]. We carried on treating the wounded in the open air. I'd never seen so many bodies lying about after the planes had crashed. The senior German came up to me and said, 'Would you go back down to the hospital and help out?' When I got there, there were hundreds of Germans and British wounded. I'd never seen anything like it, and we used the ammunition dump caves as hospital wards for the Germans."

"WRIGHT WAS CAPTURED WITH THOUSANDS OF OTHER ALLIED TROOPS, ALTHOUGH HE WAS IMMEDIATELY KEPT BUSY TENDING TO THE WOUNDED OF BOTH SIDES"

Captivity

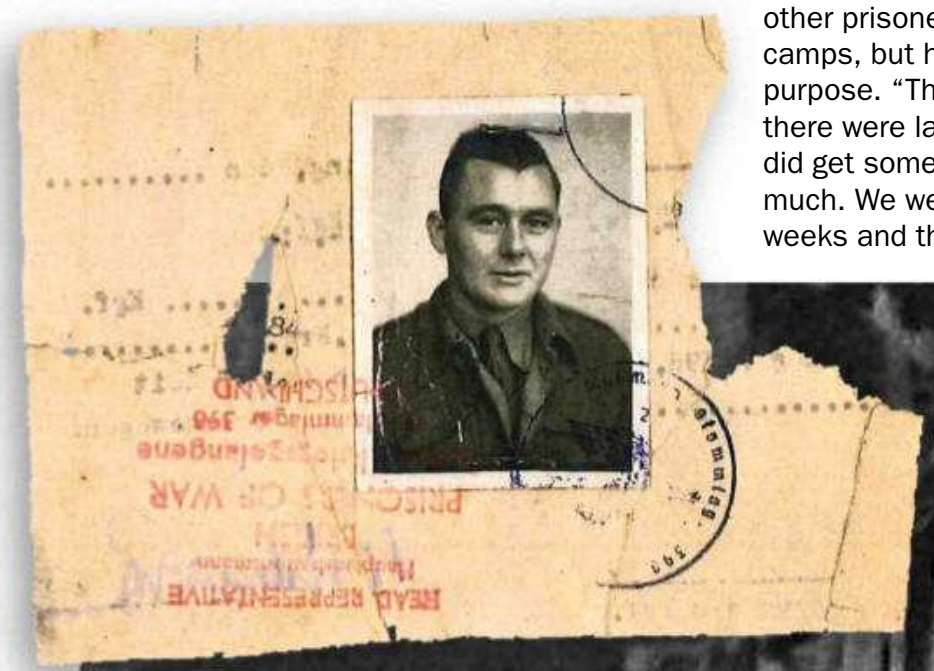
After the fall of Leros, Wright was sent to Athens before being transported by train to Hungary. "It took ten days to get up there. In that time we had three lots of soup and nothing else." By the time Wright reached Hungary he was ill with dysentery and was placed on a public train with other sick prisoners to a terrible destination. "Those who had the runs had to open the window, but there were women and children on the train too. They took us up the Danube and dropped us off at a place near Linz. We walked in and it was a concentration camp."

Wright's destination was Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp: a huge complex where between 122,766 and 320,000 people were killed. Wright was temporarily held there with other prisoners who were being moved to POW camps, but he was unaware of the camp's true purpose. "The entrance to it was amazing – there were large flags and it looked smart. We did get some food but it couldn't have been much. We were in there for about two to three weeks and they also had several wounded Italians. They had boilers, ovens and everything there. But we didn't know what was going on."

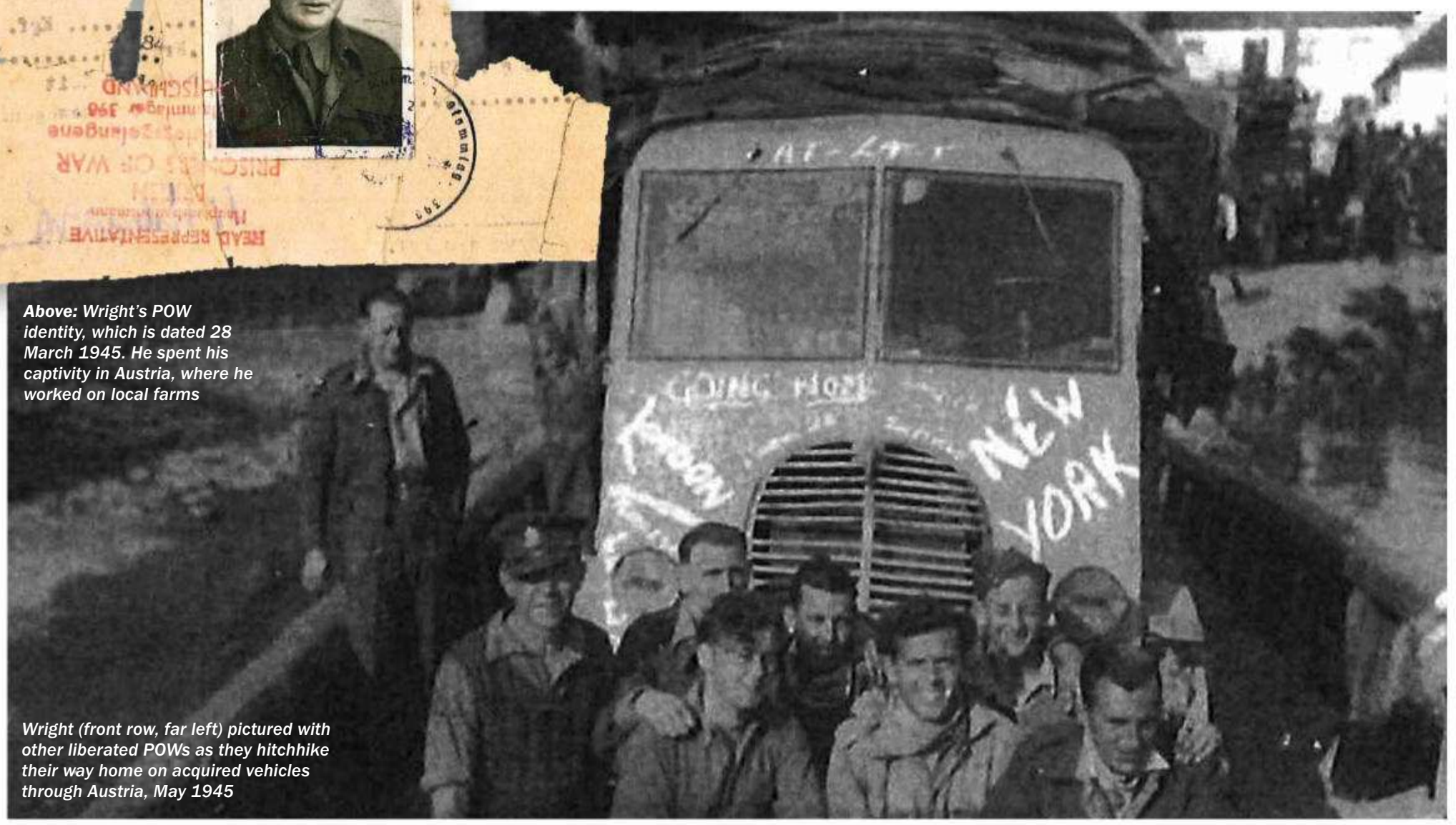
Following Mauthausen-Gusen, Wright was sent to a POW camp in Austria, where he remained for the rest of the war, working on local farms and providing medical care. After being liberated by US forces in 1945, Wright and several of his POW friends were misdirected by their liberators to aircraft in Passau to take them home. But after discovering that Passau was occupied by the Russians, the liberated prisoners improvised their return journey. "We had to hunt for broken-down vehicles to hitch a lift with. We found one or two lorries, but they were very slow. We then found a tractor, and all seven of us sat on it. It only did two miles per hour (3.2 kilometres per hour) and it was quicker to walk!"

After travelling further on a bus and a stolen Wehrmacht car, the POWs finally found US aircraft that would take them to France. Even then, Wright was not free from danger. "There were seats with portholes. I looked out and the planes were flying too close together. I went into the cockpit and the pilots were asleep! They said they'd been flying for several hours. But they dropped us off in France."

Wright eventually returned home and ended the conflict as a warrant officer, the medical equivalent of a sergeant major. He'd had an action-packed war across Europe, but it was for his early fighting in Norway that he would be later commended. In October 2017 the Norwegian government honoured Wright with a special medal to thank him for his services in 1940. Colonel John Andreas Olsen, the defence attaché to the Norwegian Embassy in London, presented him with the award. Olsen praised Wright for his courage: "I am privileged to honour Sonny for his contribution. He risked his life and showed outstanding bravery."

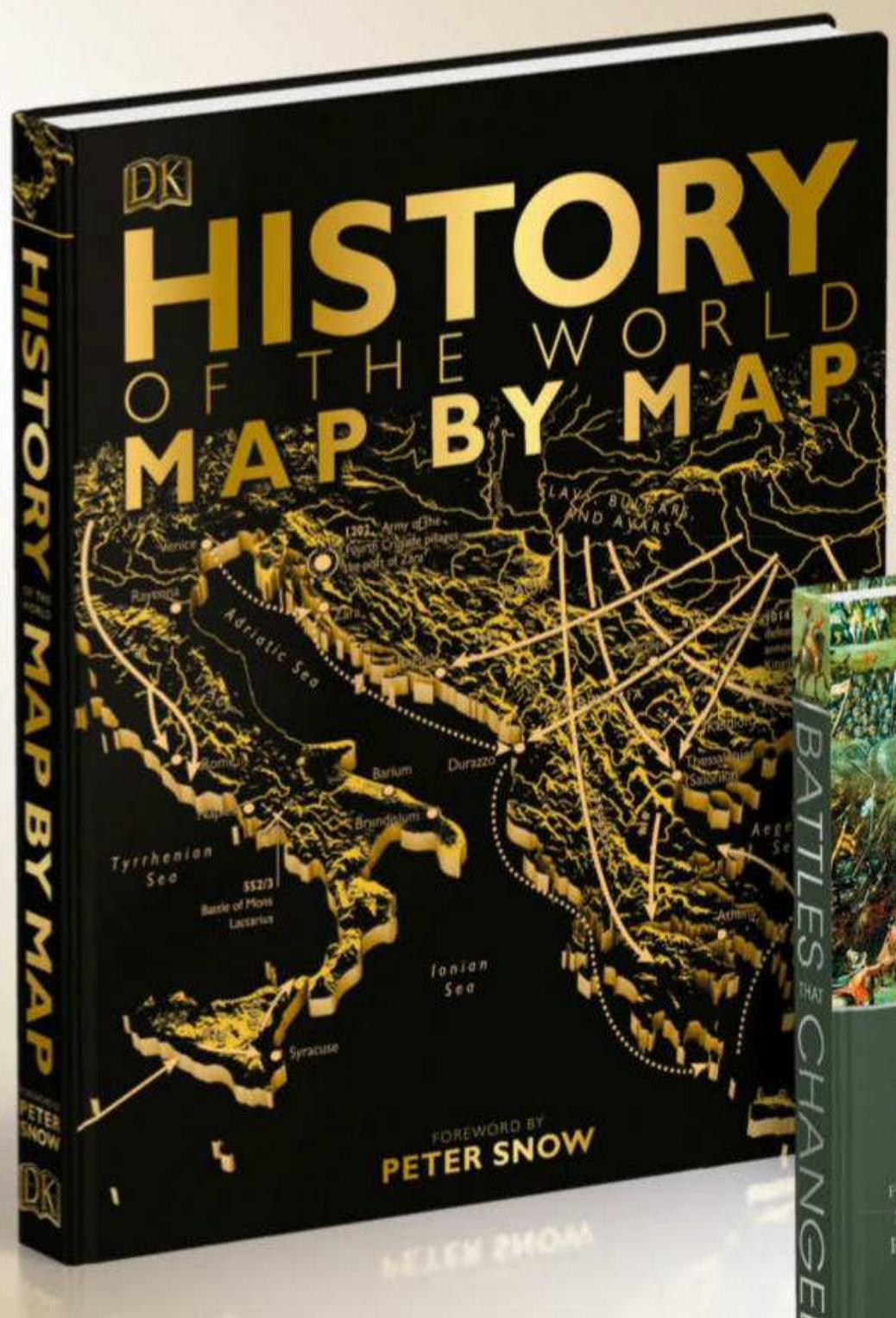


***Above:** Wright's POW identity, which is dated 28 March 1945. He spent his captivity in Austria, where he worked on local farms*



Wright (front row, far left) pictured with other liberated POWs as they hitchhike their way home on acquired vehicles through Austria, May 1945

AMAZING TALES OF THE **PAST**



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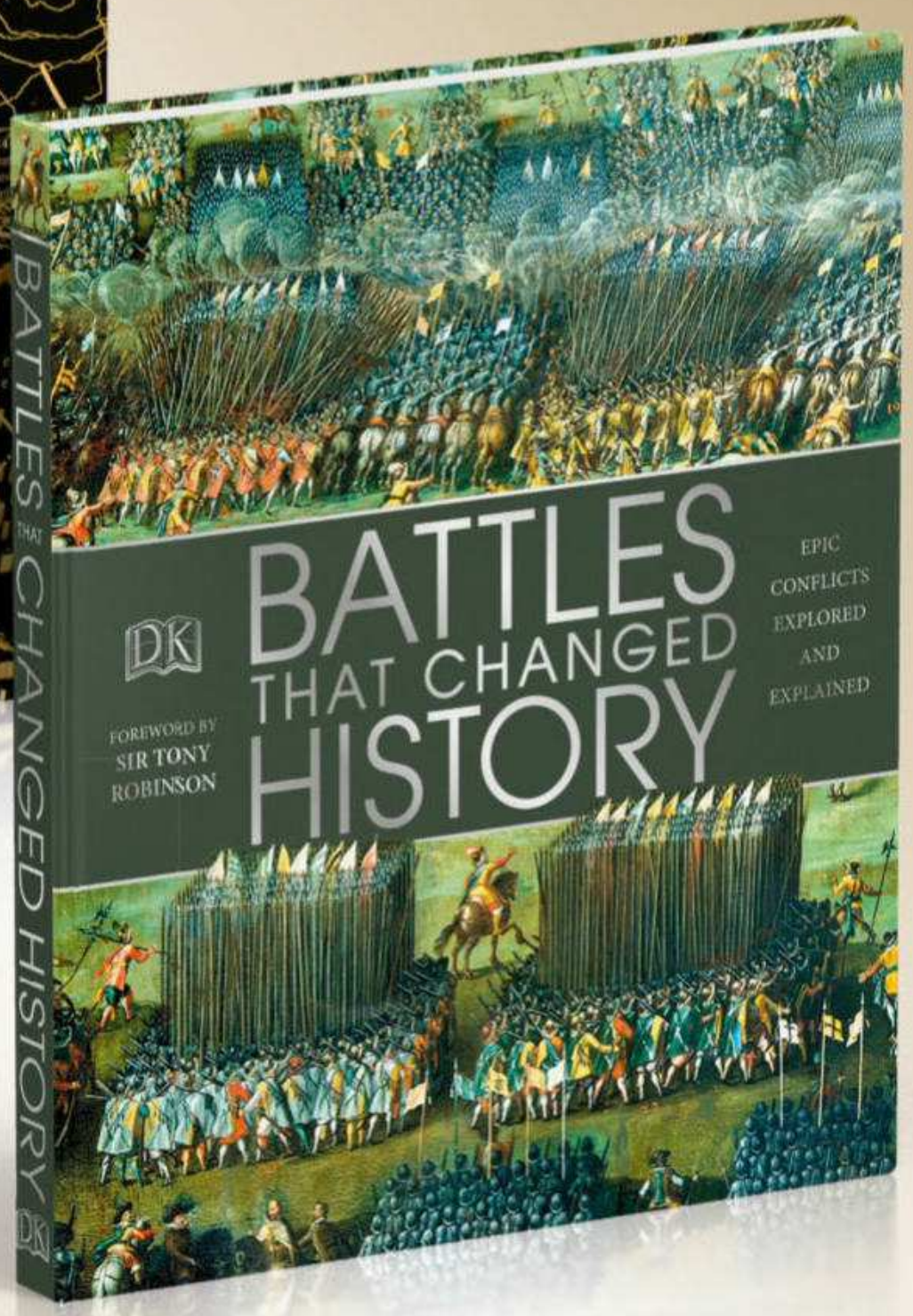

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GREAT SIEGE OF MALTA

The attacking Ottomans underestimated the steadfast determination of the Knights of Saint John to preserve their island base in the Central Mediterranean

WORDS **WILLIAM E. WELSH**

CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN SEA MAY-SEPTEMBER 1565

A squadron of seven galleys flying the eight-pointed cross of the Order of Saint John swarmed a heavily laden Ottoman merchant galley in the Ionian Sea in 1564. After a sharp struggle in which the knights overwhelmed the janissaries guarding its precious cargo, Admiral Mathurin Romegas netted plunder worth 80,000 ducats.

The presence of the janissaries was a clue that the cargo did not belong to any ordinary Ottoman merchantman, but rather to Sultan Suleiman I. The vessel was carrying goods from Venice to Istanbul. The cargo belonged to Kustir-Aga, chief eunuch of the imperial harem, who was the agent of a commercial venture established by Mihrimah, the sultan's daughter, and other members of the imperial harem.

Mihrimah was furious at the loss of the valuable cargo. She pleaded with her father to stop the Christian pirates. Suleiman already had plans to invade Malta, where the Order of Saint John was based, as he wanted to use the island as a staging point for amphibious operations against Italy and Spain. The incident in the Ionian Sea solidified his determination to launch an expedition against Malta.

OPPOSING FORCES

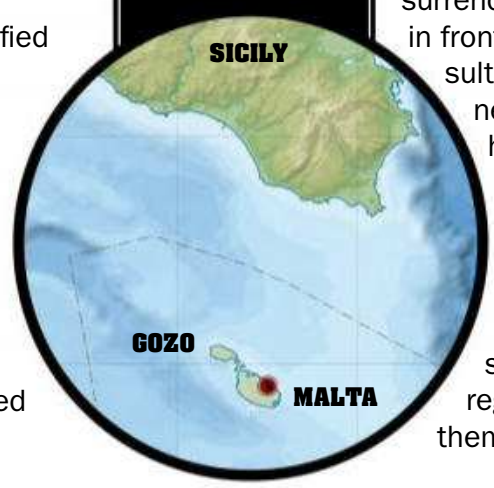
OTTOMAN ARMY

LEADERS: Piali Pasha, Mustafa Pasha, and Dragut
TROOPS: 40,000
SHIPS: 200
GUNS: 65

VS

KNIGHTS ARMY

LEADERS: Grand Master Jean Parisot de la Valette
TROOPS: 5,700
SHIPS: 5
GUNS: 50



Christian Corsairs

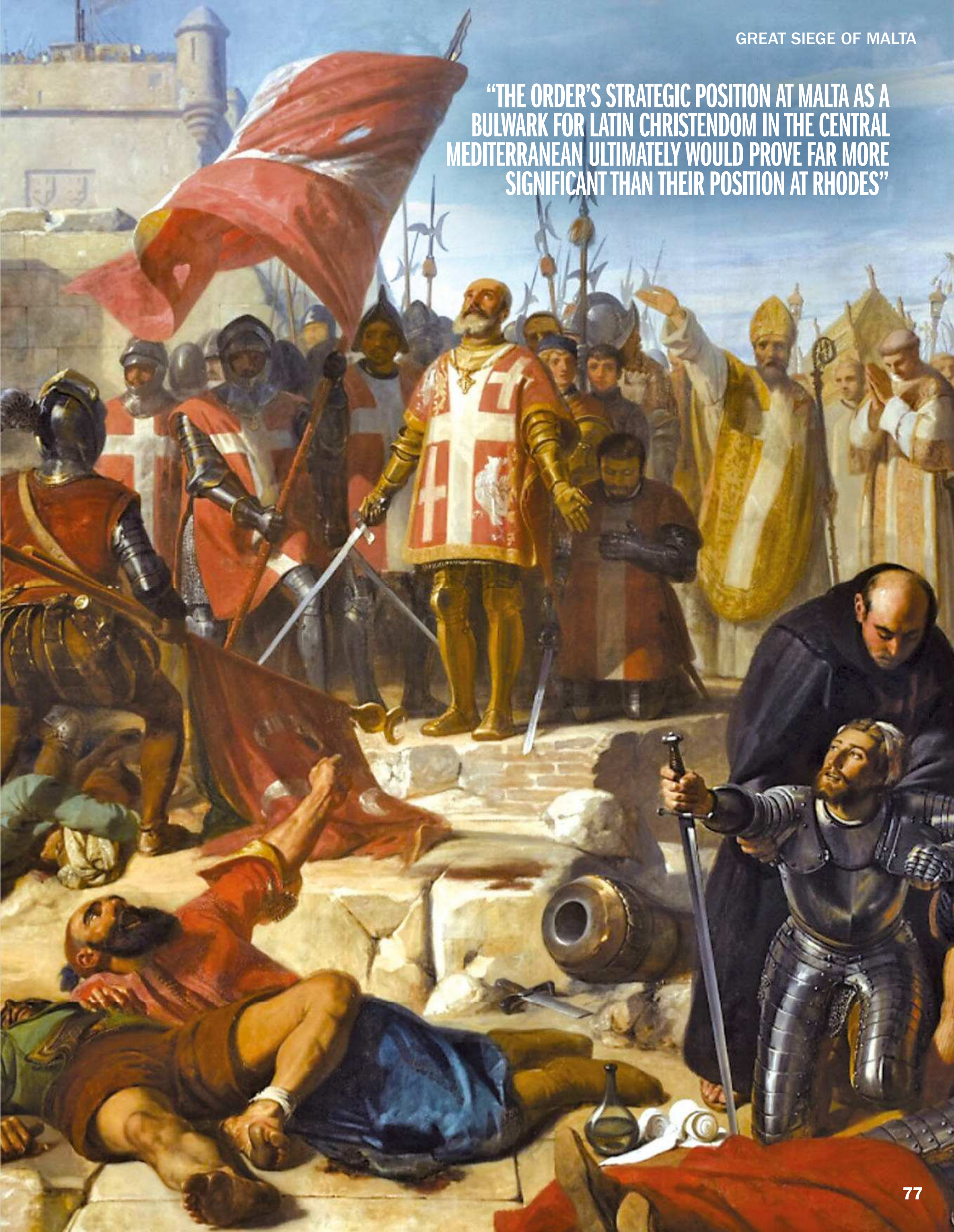
After the fall of Acre in 1291, which marked the end of the Latin crusader states in the Holy Land, the Order of Knights of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem (Hospitallers) relocated to Cyprus. The knights began to build a fleet with which to harass the southern Turkish coast. They appointed their first admiral in 1301 and began building a small fleet of war galleys. Pope Clement V called on the Order to take Rhodes from the declining Byzantine Empire, which it did in 1310 after a four-year struggle.

The Order then quit Cyprus, where its future was bleak. For the next two centuries the Order thrived at Rhodes, where it continued its transformation into a minor naval power. Following the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453, the Order of Saint John became the last bastion of Christianity in the eastern Mediterranean. Through stalwart leadership – which would become a recurring theme in its many battles against superior forces – the Order withstood a siege of Rhodes by the Mamluks in 1444 and the first Ottoman siege in 1480. However, they would not withstand the second Ottoman siege in 1522.

That fateful siege occurred in the second year of Suleiman's reign. After six months of fruitless attacks that cost him 60,000 men, Suleiman granted the knights an honourable surrender in order to avoid wintering in front of their walls. As part of the sultan's terms, they promised never to take up arms against him again – an oath they would unsurprisingly break. Because of the trouble their war galleys later caused by preying on Ottoman pilgrim transports and merchant ships, Suleiman came to regret his decision to allow them safe passage.

Christian forces under Jean de la Valette give thanks upon the arrival of the Spanish fleet

"THE ORDER'S STRATEGIC POSITION AT MALTA AS A BULWARK FOR LATIN CHRISTENDOM IN THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN ULTIMATELY WOULD PROVE FAR MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN THEIR POSITION AT RHODES"



For eight years the Order was without a permanent base, until Charles V, the Holy Roman emperor, gave them Malta in 1530. They took the offer, despite some qualms about the lack of fertile land, shortage of potable water and an absence of forests needed for shipbuilding. The upsides of Malta were the abundance of stone for the construction of forts and its superb harbours. The strategic position on the island as a bulwark for Latin Christendom in the Central Mediterranean ultimately would prove far more significant than the Order's previous position at Rhodes.

The Italian-made armour worn by Grand Master Jean de la Valette

Fortifying Malta

Following an unsuccessful attack against Malta by the Ottoman corsair Dragut in 1551, the Order of Saint John constructed two new forts. The star fort Saint Elmo, on the north side of the Grand Harbour, covered the approaches to both the Grand Harbour and Marsamuscetto inlet, the island's two best anchorages. On the south side of Grand Harbour, the towns of Birgu and Senglia were situated on parallel promontories that jutted into the harbour. To protect Senglia, the Order built Fort Saint Michael across the top of the peninsula. A high wall and ditch surrounded the Birgu peninsula, and Fort Saint Angelo crowned its point. In the island's centre, a small mounted garrison defended the walled city of Mdina.

Suleiman picked Admiral Piali Pasha and General Mustafa Pasha to lead the expedition to Malta. Mustafa was a veteran of long wars in Persia and Hungary, and had fought at Rhodes in 1522. As for Piali, he was younger, but had won distinction commanding the Ottoman fleet at Djerba.

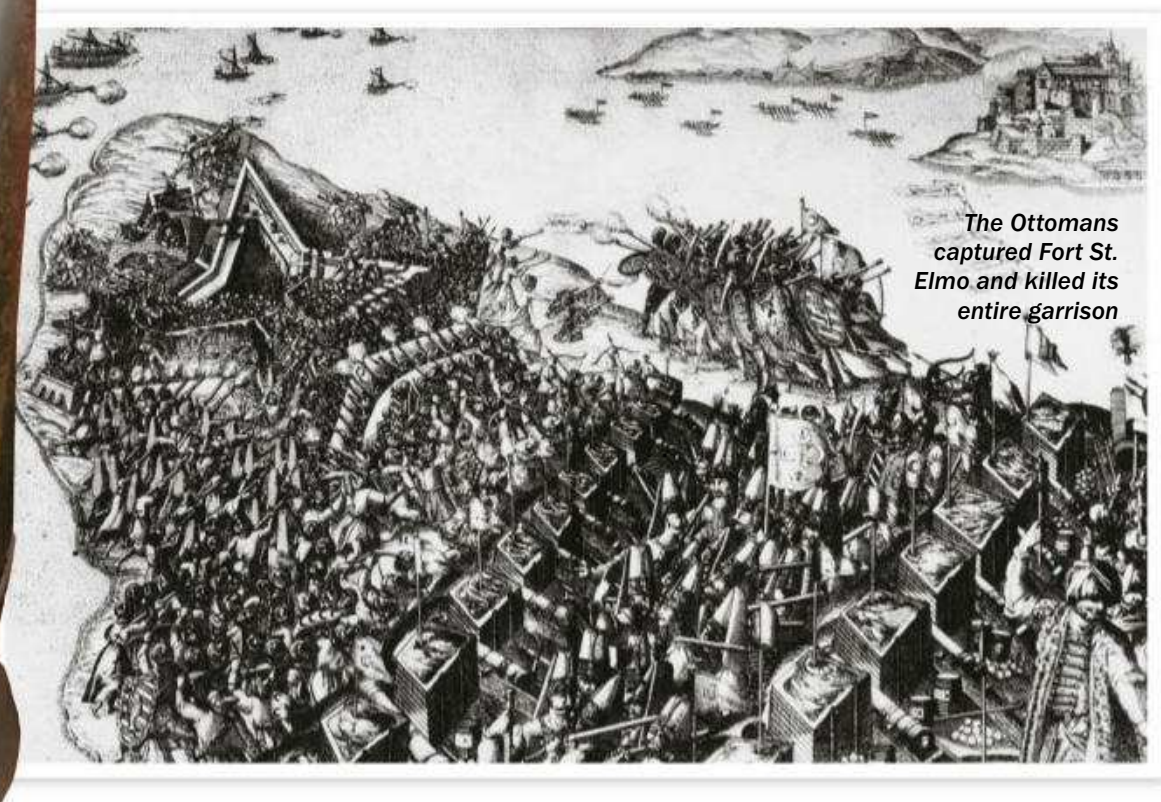
The commander of the Christian forces was 71-year-old Grand Master Jean de la Valette. He had fought the Ottomans at Rhodes in 1522. Almost two decades later, while serving as captain of a galley in 1541, the Ottomans captured his vessel and made him and his crew galley slaves. He was freed after one year in a prisoner exchange. He was inured to hardship as a result, and at the time of the Ottoman invasion of Malta he was still robust and fit. A devout member of the Order, he regarded the Ottomans as barbarians.

The Ottoman armada arrived in three divisions off Malta on 18 May 1565. La Valette's mix of Hospitaller knights and sergeants, Spanish soldiers and Maltese militia braced themselves for an attack at one or more points. The Ottomans sailed the breadth of the island before deciding to land at Marasirocco Harbour on the southern tip of the island. The Ottomans then marched 6.5 kilometres (four miles) inland, and on 20 May they encamped at Marsa on the west end of Grand Harbour.

La Valette promptly sent a message by boat to Don Garcia de Toledo, viceroy of Sicily, who was 48 kilometres (30 miles) away across the Malta Channel in Sicily, stating that the siege had begun and asking when reinforcements might be expected. He received a response that, if all went well, he could expect reinforcements as early as 22 June. At the time, Sicily and Naples belonged to Spanish King Philip II. Toledo, who commanded a squadron of Spanish ships at Sicily, assumed he would be able to get Philip's permission to send a relief force, but Philip was initially reluctant to send a Spanish fleet and land force to relieve Malta, for fear that the far stronger Ottoman fleet might sink his ships. Five years earlier a Spanish fleet attacking the Ottoman corsair base at Djerba had been destroyed by the sultan's fleet, and the Spanish navy had still not recovered completely from the damaging defeat.

From the outset the two pashas clashed over strategy. Mustafa favoured an anchorage on the northern end of Malta, with a steady advance south by the Ottoman army followed by a concentrated attack on Saint Angelo, which was the nerve centre of the Order's defences. As for Piali, he argued that it was necessary to move immediately to capture Saint Elmo so that he could anchor his fleet in Marsamuscetto

"AT THE TIME OF THE INVASION OF MALTA HE WAS STILL ROBUST AND FIT. A DEVOUT MEMBER OF THE ORDER, HE REGARDED THE TURKS AS BARBARIANS"



The Ottomans captured Fort St. Elmo and killed its entire garrison

Jean de la Valette, grand master of the Order of St. John, orchestrated a magnificent defence of Malta

inlet, where it would receive the best protection possible from storms and gale force winds that might damage the sultan's ships. From the fleet's anchorage in the inlet, it could support the operations against Fort Saint Elmo. Piali prevailed, and the Ottomans prepared to assault Saint Elmo by hauling guns into position on Mount Sciberras on Saint Elmo's landward side.

The 40,000-strong Ottoman army was composed of spahis, janissaries, layalars (religious fanatics) and corsairs. Because the solid rock under Fort Saint Elmo precluded mining the walls, they would have to batter the walls with direct fire. Labourers hauled the heaviest guns – one of which was a massive 160-pounder – onto the ridge, placing them about 455 metres (500 yards) from the outerworks of Fort Saint Elmo.

La Valette's 5,700 Christian troops on Malta consisted of 700 knights from the Order of Saint John, 1,000 Spanish infantrymen and 4,000 Maltese militiamen. At the outset of the attack on Saint Elmo, the garrison numbered about 80 men, including around 15 knights. Each night La Valette sent small boats from Fort Saint Angelo to reinforce and resupply the garrison. The odds were evened somewhat by the fact that the garrison was supported by 19 cannon and a half-culverin.

The defence of the land wall protecting the town of Birgu was extremely important as the Order's convent and hospital were situated on the narrow peninsula. Knights from each of the eight langues – Aragon, Auvergne, Castile, England, France, Germany, Italy and Provence – were assigned a section of Birgu's outer wall, which was studded with bastions facing inland. Knights of the Order of Saint John fought with two-handed swords and wore suits of plate armour that were impervious to an arquebus round unless it was fired at point-blank range. As for the Spaniards, they were crack shots with their arquebuses.

Attack on Fort Saint Elmo

The Ottoman guns began bombarding Saint Elmo on 25 May. The heavy cannonballs soon took their toll on the walls, producing cracks and crumbling the battlements. It was not long before sections of the wall collapsed. While the cannons blasted away, hundreds of janissaries armed with arquebuses pinned down the Christians on the ramparts.

On 2 June the 80-year-old Dragut, a celebrated Ottoman admiral and corsair, arrived from Tripoli with 24 galleys and 2,500 men. Suleiman had ordered him to join the campaign and keep a sharp eye out for a Christian fleet coming to the garrison's assistance. His reputation put him on par with Piali and Mustafa. He was proficient at coastal raiding and amphibious warfare and had played a central role in the destruction of the Spanish fleet at Djerba.

Dragut immediately set to work improving the siege batteries. He ordered his corsairs to unload guns from his galleys to form additional batteries. New batteries were established at Gallows Point on the south shore of Grand Harbour, as well as on the headland known as Tigne across the inlet from Fort Saint Elmo. This exposed the defenders of Saint Elmo to fire from three directions. Additionally, the guns

01 ROUT OF TURKS
On 19 May, Mustafa Pasha's soldiers attack the curtain wall protecting the suburb of Birgu on the south side of the Grand Harbour. Supported by two powerful batteries, the knights of the Castilian langue emerge from a sally port in the wall, routing the startled Ottomans. The Ottomans subsequently withdraw.

02 CHRISTIAN SORTIE AT ST. ELMO
The Christians defending St. Elmo conduct a sortie on 29 May against the Ottoman trenches. In the face of the attack, Ottoman engineers and soldiers abandon their forward positions. Mustafa Pasha orders his janissaries to retake the lost ground. They sweep forward, driving back the Christians and capturing the outerworks of the fort.

03 CAVALRY RAID
On 9 June the Christian cavalry detachment from Mdina in the centre of the island launches a raid that temporarily knocks out the Ottoman guns at Gallows Point. The crucial strike enables the defenders to continue to send small boats across the harbour to resupply and reinforce the beleaguered garrison at St. Elmo.

04 FALL OF ST. ELMO
The Ottomans launch a fresh all-out attack on 23 June against the crumbling walls of Fort St. Elmo. The 60 Christian defenders fight to the death. The time-consuming siege of St. Elmo costs the Ottomans heavily.

05 GRUESOME TACTICS
Following the capture of Fort St. Elmo, the Ottomans mount the decapitated bodies of the dead knights on crucifixes, which they float across the harbour to Fort St. Angelo. La Valette responds by ordering his gunners to fire the heads of executed Ottoman prisoners from cannons atop St. Angelo.

06 LITTLE RELIEF FORCE ARRIVES
A pair of Spanish galleys lands 42 knights and 600 Spanish infantry on the north shore of the island in late June. A dense fog on 5 July furnishes the cover for their transport by small boats into Birgu.

07 OTTOMAN AMPHIBIOUS ATTACK
Having portaged boats from Marsamuscetto inlet to Marsa, the Ottomans launch an amphibious attack against Senglia on 15 July. Algerian corsairs attempt to storm the beach along French Creek. When that fails, they try to reach Fort St. Angelo by water, but a Hospitaller battery sinks the boats.

08 SUSTAINED SHELLING
The Ottomans begin a five-day bombardment on 2 August with all of their siege batteries at once, in order to soften up Senglia and Birgu for landward assaults. One of the hardest hit positions is St. Angelo, which is caught in a crossfire from batteries on Mount Sciberras, Gallows Point and Mount Salvador.

09 TURKISH CAMP DESTROYED
While the Ottoman troops are preoccupied attacking Birgu and Senglia on 7 August, the Christian cavalry based in Mdina attacks and destroys the Ottoman camp. The Ottomans return from battle to find their tents ablaze, their wounded slain and their horses stolen.

10 SIEGE TOWER FALLS
In a fresh effort to capture Birgu and St. Angelo, the Turks roll a wooden siege tower up to the land walls. The Christians unmask a battery at ground level and fire chain shot at the base of the tower, sending it crashing to the ground.

Great Battles

1565 GREAT SIEGE OF MALTA

Map: Battlefield Design

on Gallows Point were well-placed to try to destroy the boats ferrying men and supplies to Saint Elmo across the harbour each night.

After Dragut had finished his improvements to the guns arrayed against Saint Elmo, they resumed their bombardment on 3 June. The steady battering turned Saint Elmo into something “like a volcano, spouting fire and smoke,” according to eyewitness Francesco Balbi di Correggio, a Spanish soldier stationed in Fort Saint Michael.

On the night of 6 June, Turkish janissaries in the siege trenches surrounding the west side of Saint Elmo noticed that the Christian guards were asleep. They sent word to Mustafa, who ordered them to place ladders as quietly as possible against the crumbling walls in the pre-dawn darkness. Other janissaries thrust the long barrels of their German-made arquebuses through the squares of the portcullis.

When Mustafa gave the signal to attack, arquebus fire crackled and the janissaries atop the ladders leapt onto the battlements. Men on both sides became involved in a vicious hand-to-hand fight on top of the ramparts. Turkish scimitars and hand axes clanged against the knights’ and militia's heavy swords and halberds. To prevent the Ottomans from infiltrating the portcullis, the defenders hurled clay pots containing Greek fire. When the pots exploded, they created balls of flame that engulfed whole groups of attackers. The Christians beat the defenders back and waited for the next onslaught.

Mustafa ordered a large-scale assault the following day. White-robed janissaries streamed forth from their forward trenches. As they climbed their ladders, the defenders unleashed their full array of fire weapons, including Greek fire, fire hoops and primitive flame throwers to repulse the attackers. A fire hoop consisted of a light wooden ring soaked in oil and flammable liquids, wrapped in wool and treated with pitch and gunpowder. The Christians lit the fire hoop,

“HIGH ON HASHISH, THESE RELIGIOUS FANATICS CHARGED WILD-EYED TOWARDS THE FORT. THEY WORE ANIMAL SKINS AND PROTECTED THEIR HEADS WITH GOLDEN HELMETS”

and then used tongs to hurl it aflame over the wall. The hoop was large enough to encircle and burn three Ottomans at once. After losing 2,000 of his elite janissaries, Mustafa called off the attack. As for the defenders, they lost ten knights and 70 soldiers.

The Ottomans then launched another night attack on 10 June, in which both sides hurled incendiary devices at each other. The Ottoman grenades, which the Christians called 'sachetti', contained a gummy substance that clung to a knight’s armour while it burned. The defenders kept large vats of water next to the walls so that when a knight was struck by one of these fire grenades, he could jump in the water to extinguish the flames. The night attack cost Mustafa another 1,500 janissaries and the defenders 60 more men.

The Christian garrison at Saint Elmo kept the Ottomans at bay for many days thanks to their large complement of cannon. The guns not only mowed down troops in the forward trenches, but also did superb work in a counter-battery role.

Dragut’s death

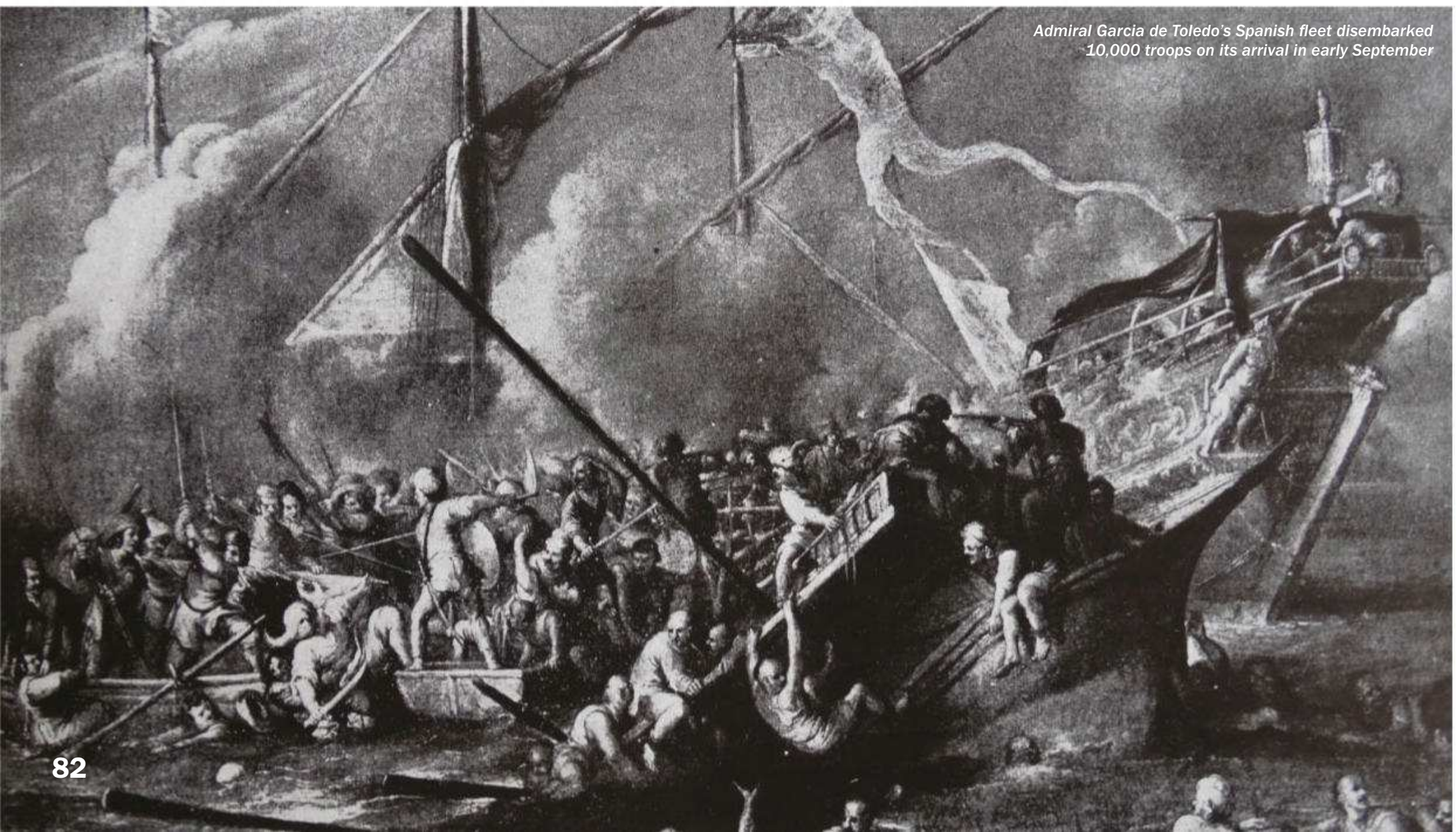
To conserve the dwindling number of his elite janissaries, Mustafa ordered his corps of layalars to make an attack against Saint Elmo on 16 June. High on hashish, these religious fanatics charged wild-eyed towards the fort. They wore animal skins and protected their heads with golden helmets. They scrambled over the rubble of the walls with menacing scimitars to grapple with the Christians. Cannon and arquebus fire from the fort cut many down, and 1,000 fell in the ferocious attack.

Two days later Christian cannoneers at Fort Saint Elmo fired on a group of senior Ottoman commanders who were inspecting the siege trenches on the west side of the fort. A cannonball shattered a stone wall behind them, sending a large splinter of rock flying through the air. The splinter tore open the side of Dragut’s head, and he died five days later. His aggressive leadership would be sorely missed in the weeks that followed.

That night La Valette sent 30 knights and 300 soldiers across the harbour under cover of darkness to join the garrison at Saint Elmo. They were the last reinforcements that would arrive. The following day the Ottomans completed a trench at the waterline along the north shore of Grand Harbour, which enabled them to fire on the boats attempting to make the night run from Saint Angelo to Saint Elmo.

On 23 June Mustafa sent the janissaries against Fort Saint Elmo. By that time the Ottoman trenches completely encircled the fort. Janissaries in the trenches poured heavy fire into the fort from all directions. The Ottomans breached the walls and wiped out the remaining 60 defenders. The siege had lasted 31 days.

From their position on the south side of the harbour, the remaining Christian troops knew the fort had fallen when Ottoman banners were raised over the ruins. The attack cost the Ottomans a month of valuable time during the campaign season. It also cost them 8,000 men, or one-fifth of their entire force. In contrast, La Valette lost 1,500 knights and soldiers in the defence of Saint Elmo. If the Ottomans wanted to conquer Malta, they still had to take two major fortresses on the south side of the harbour, as well as the heavily defended landward walls protecting Birgu.



Admiral Garcia de Toledo’s Spanish fleet disembarked 10,000 troops on its arrival in early September

Time crunch

The second phase of the siege consisted of Mustafa's attack on the twin promontories that housed Birgu and Senglia, which were protected by the forts Saint Angelo and Saint Michael. The two commanders came to an agreement: Piali would oversee the attack against Birgu while Mustafa would orchestrate the assault on Senglia. In order to batter the landward walls protecting the peninsulas, labourers began hauling the siege guns from Mount Sciberras to new positions on the south side of Grand Harbour. One of the most imposing new gun positions was atop the heights of Corradino, from which the Ottomans could deliver plunging fire against Senglia.

In late August dysentery, typhoid and malaria swept through the Ottoman ranks, substantially reducing the number of soldiers available for combat. Piali Pasha knew that the strong north winds would soon bring rains and churn up the seas around Malta. Without a shipyard to repair and maintain his ships, Piali believed he would be risking the sultan's fleet by wintering in Malta. For these reasons, he informed Mustafa that he planned to depart no later than mid-September for Istanbul with or without the land army on board his ships.

The Ottomans successfully detonated a mine under the land walls of Birgu on 19 August. When part of the wall crashed to the ground, the Ottomans fought their way into the town. La Valette, whose headquarters were in the town's square, led a group of Christian troops forward in a counterattack. The grand master was only partially armoured, and when a grenade exploded near him it injured his leg. "I will not withdraw as long as those banners wave in the wind," he said, pointing to Ottoman flags that had been planted in the breach. The Ottomans resumed their attack at dusk. The fighting see-sawed back and forth throughout the long night. At dawn the Ottomans withdrew, having failed to capture the town.

Both sides had to endure torrential rains that struck the island in late August. The Ottomans huddled in their trenches. Piali grew increasingly concerned that a Spanish fleet was drawing near, and he ordered 30 galleys to patrol the island's coastline.

A Spanish army arrives

King Philip II was reluctant to allow the relief force from Sicily to sail to Malta for fear he would lose some or all of his galleys. But Toledo finally succeeded in persuading the king. "Malta is the key to Sicily, and if it is lost the defence of your own possessions will have to be at such an immense expense that I do not know how it can be borne," he told the Spanish monarch. Toledo received permission from Philip II on 20 August to transport the 10,000-man relief force to Malta.

By that time, the Ottomans had begun withdrawing their army in stages. Mustafa had a major challenge on his hands coordinating a calm retreat to the embarkation points. The pace of the withdrawal quickened when word came that a large relief force had arrived.

After dropping off the 10,000 Spanish troops at Mellieha Bay on 6 September, Toledo ordered the Spanish warships to depart immediately to avoid a naval engagement. The Spanish relief force marched halfway to Grand Harbour, taking up a blocking position at Naxxar only eight kilometres (five miles) away. Although some of La Valette's men wanted to attack the Ottomans while they were loading their ships, the grand master forbade it, as he wanted to preserve his manpower.

On 10 September the Ottoman army was ready to depart for Istanbul, but Mustafa had second thoughts. He had recently received a letter from Suleiman, telling him he must return to Istanbul with news of a victory. For that reason, Mustafa wanted to try to crush the Spanish relief army before he departed. If that could be done, he reasoned, he might force La Valette to surrender. He therefore disembarked 10,000 troops the following day.

The Spaniards excelled in pitched battles on open fields, and they gladly offered combat. As the Ottomans approached Naxxar, there was a race to see which side could seize the high ground. The Spanish won the race, and they immediately began pushing back the Ottomans. Arquebusiers on both sides poured fire into their foe's ranks. When the Ottomans wavered, the Spanish pikemen crashed into their lines. A rout ensued, with the Ottomans having no choice but to conduct a fighting retreat north to Saint Paul's Bay. Once there, they crowded onto the waiting ships.

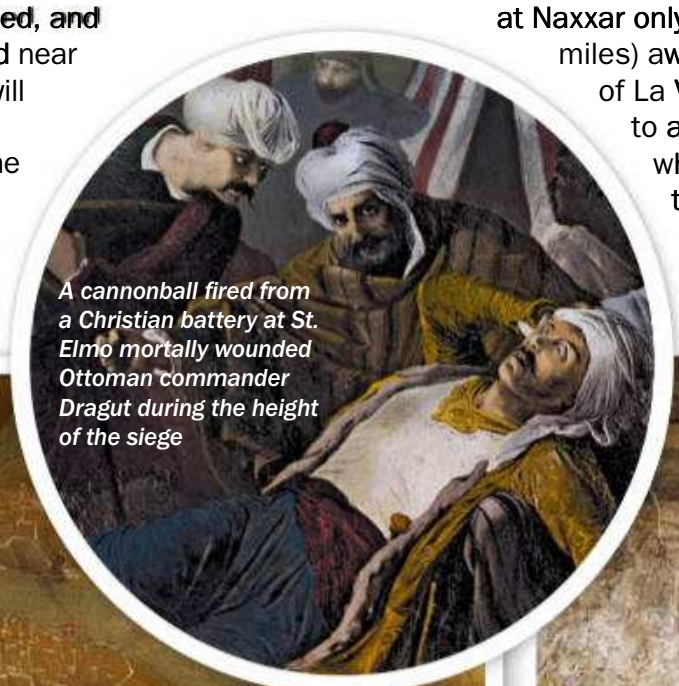
Ottoman mistakes

The Ottoman army lost 24,000 of its 40,000 men in the failed siege. A significant number of those succumbed to disease and the climate. Of the 5,700 Christian troops on Malta, 600 remained by the end of the siege.

The siege is remembered as one of the epic Christian-Muslim clashes of the 16th century. The Ottoman loss can be chalked up to divisive leadership, flawed strategy and lack of safe drinking water. The soldiers were blameless, having fought heroically. The defeat derailed plans to control the North African coast.

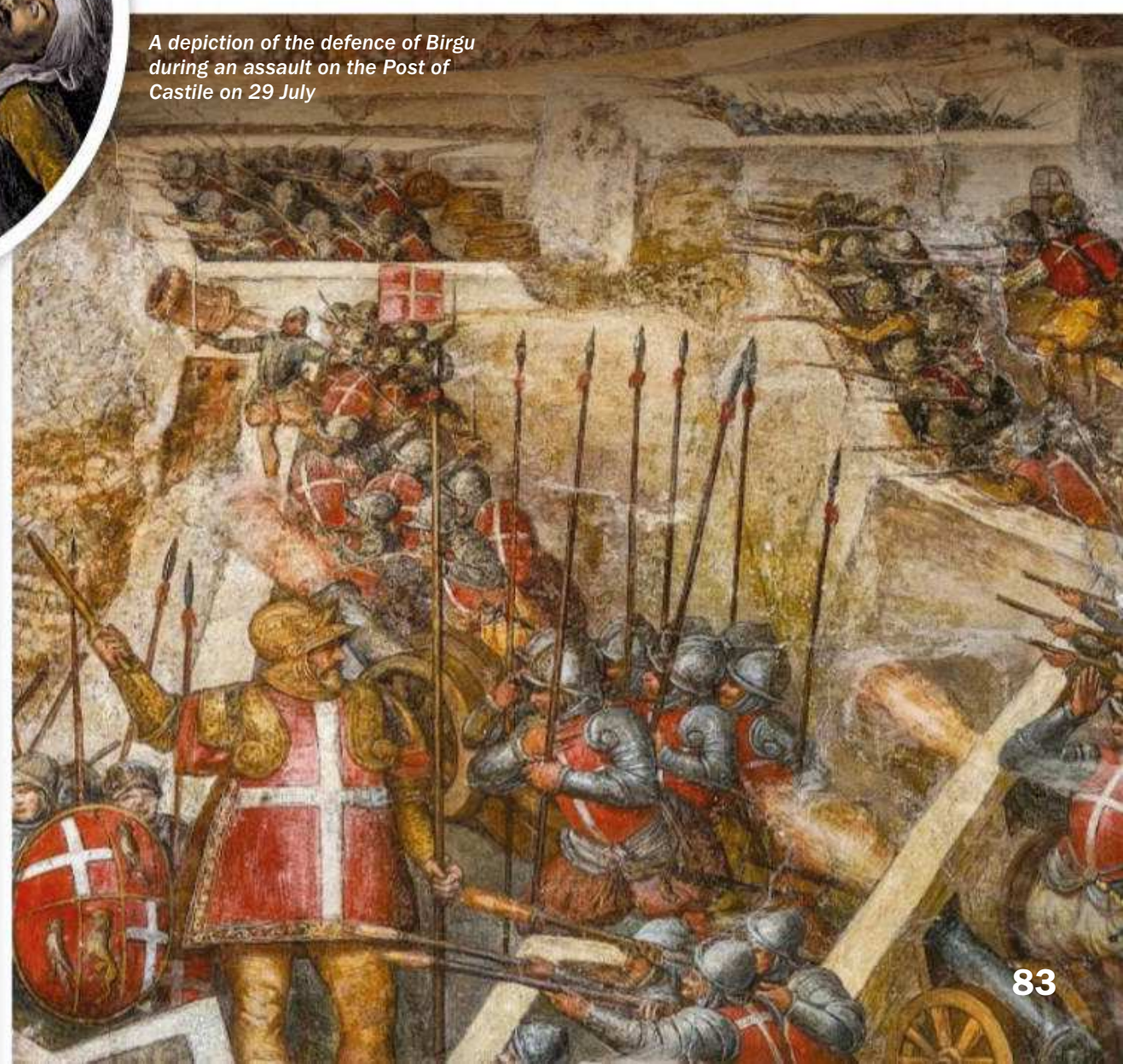
As for the Knights of Saint John, they had shown they were formidable on both land and sea. The Order's victory was due to La Valette's inspiring leadership, the high morale of the troops and the arrival of the Spanish army. Without any one of those factors, Malta might have fallen.

Images: Alamy, Battlefield Design, FreeVectorMaps, Getty



A cannonball fired from a Christian battery at St. Elmo mortally wounded Ottoman commander Dragut during the height of the siege

The Ottoman camp and the bombardment of St. Elmo. Piali, Mustafa and a commander of Dragut's corsairs can be seen in discussion in the centre



A depiction of the defence of Birgu during an assault on the Post of Castile on 29 July

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George Evans pictured as a private in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment during WWII. Evans was a very reluctant conscript

George Evans pictured wearing white and red poppies, a T-shirt that declares, "War is Stupid", his father's WWI medal ribbon and his own WWII medals, 19 July 2018

WORDS **TOM GARNER**

THE VETERAN PACIFIST

AN INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE EVANS

This WWII survivor witnessed the full horrors of war in Normandy and Bergen-Belsen but used his experiences to campaign for a peaceful world

In 2014, George Evans recited the poem *For The Fallen* at his local Remembrance Sunday parade in his hometown of Wellington, Shropshire. He had done this for many years, but on this occasion he also recited his own self-composed poem, *The Lesson*. "I remember my friends and my enemies too/We all did our duties to our countries/We all obeyed our orders/Then we murdered each other/Isn't war stupid?"

For deviating from the traditional script Evans was subsequently barred from giving the reading again by the local branch of the Royal British Legion, and the ensuing controversy was reported by national newspapers. Despite the fallout, it is arguable that Evans had earned the right to say what he said. He had participated in fierce fighting in Normandy in 1944 as a private in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. After heavy regimental losses, Evans was transferred to the Herefordshire Light Infantry and fought across Western Europe and into Germany. He subsequently participated in the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, and it was these horrific experiences that developed and reinforced his pacifism.

Evans later became a Quaker and turned his pacifist beliefs into actions, which culminated in the opening of a public 'Peace Garden' in Wellington in 2012. Now aged 95, he discusses his reluctant soldiering, campaigning for peace, and why war is not inevitable.

A "frightened" conscript

How did it feel to be conscripted into the army?

I was called up in 1942 when I was 18. I was frightened. You get things in life that frighten you and I frighten easily. Perhaps that accounts for the fact that I've survived a lot of things.

My father had been in WWI, where he had lost a thumb and was shot in the hand and leg at Ypres. My maternal grandfather had served in India on the Northwest Frontier and my mother had been in a ship coming home from Jamaica during WWI when a German submarine sunk it. Fortunately, she survived.

What happened before you embarked for France?

I was sent to Budbrooke Barracks and taught how to kill Germans. I was made a temporary lance corporal along with a friend called Denis Wale, who was a good guy. He was ambitious and I certainly wasn't. I was looking for ways of surviving. I didn't think any sort of leadership was safer than being one of the 'led', as the leaders get shot first.

"THERE WERE A LOT OF FLIES, AND WHEN WE GOT NEARER THERE WAS A PILE OF STACKED DEAD GERMANS"

Denis became a mine clearance officer. I met him a couple of times afterwards in Normandy after a mine blew off his leg. We used to drink together, and when he showed me his leg he joked, "Look, I'm legless again!" The next day he was dead. He had seemed quite lively and almost happy that at least he'd got a 'blighty'.

On D-Day I was on embarkation leave in Wellington and my dad and I were having a cup of coffee in a café that overlooked the war memorial. We were chatting with some local councillors that my father knew and I was in civvies so they didn't know I was in the army. They started talking about putting the names on the war memorial for the fallen and I thought this was a bit much. I said, "If you put my name on that bloody memorial I'll come back and haunt you!" They apologised and changed the subject.

The Road to Caen

What were conditions like when you landed?

When I landed on 25 June I had to jump from the ship into a landing craft during a swell. If I'd fallen in between, which was a possibility, I would have been dead because I was wearing heavy boots, all my kit and a Bren gun. I then got into a truck and we drove onto the beach.

The smell was terrible. People had been landing on this beach for 19 days and it was littered with arms, legs, heads, torsos and other bits and pieces stinking in the sun. I was terrified and was crouching underneath the sides of the vehicle that was supposedly bulletproof. Nobody told the infantrymen what beach it was.

The driver drove up a lane, where we queued. We eventually stopped in a field and could hear the battle going on nearby. We were told to dig in and I dug with a mate called 'Crunch'. He was the Indian Army's heavyweight boxing champion and was a short, powerful fella, but I suddenly realised he too was scared when we were digging the trench.

The Germans had a mortar that we called a 'Moaning Minnie' and I learned to recognise when it was a mortar coming in, which was a useful skill. They fired bombs with a lot of shrapnel that cut down anything that got in the way. I saw it cut people in half. The only sensible place to be was in a hole. I found that carrying a shovel was a useful thing when you could quickly make a hole if you were frightened enough.

What was the key incident that influenced your pacifism during the fighting?

I was initially in a mood of 'Kill them before they kill us'. At one point I had seen German machine guns firing at our chaps, and I was in a trench. I let a couple of magazines go off where the gun was. The Bren is extremely accurate and I probably killed one or two of these people.

The next day we were sent to an orchard on the road to Caen where there were lots of holes dug in. There was a field on the other side that sloped down to a hedge and back up to a German-occupied farm. They plastered us with mortars and had learnt to set the fuses to go off as soon as they touched anything. They often went off above us, so our trenches weren't as good as they could have been. The shells hit the trees, exploded and the shrapnel came down.

I was in the bottom of a trench. I knew that people had been killed or wounded because I could hear it going on, but I couldn't see anything. My face was pressed into the soil and I was busy mentally making a deal with 'Him Upstairs' to stop trying to kill Germans if I could stay alive. Our 25-pounders then fired over our heads and Typhoons came over. This repeated itself and flattened everything over the hedge and farmhouse.

We went forward (which I was very nervous about) to the farmhouse and Crunch kicked the door open, threw a grenade in and took prisoners. We noticed around the back that there was a terrible stench and we had a look. There were a lot of flies, and when we got nearer there was a pile of stacked dead Germans. Flies were laying eggs in their faces, which were hatching, and maggots were crawling out of their eyes. It was as bad as that.

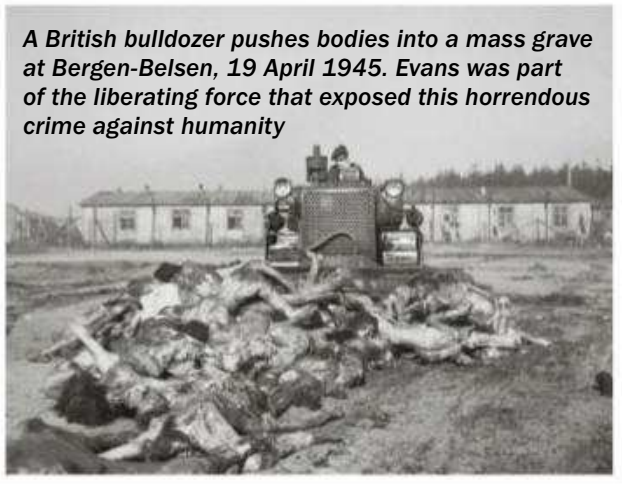
I was also horrified that they were only 15-17-year-old kids from the Hitler Youth. We buried them, although not individually, took their rifles and stuck them upside down to mark the space. When we buried them the words we said over their bodies were, "Poor buggers".

They had been SS soldiers who thought they were the cream. There was a saying among the British infantry that bravery is much like stupidity and the words 'hero' and 'idiot' are synonyms. Oddly enough, the Wehrmacht thought similarly and called the SS 'heroes'.

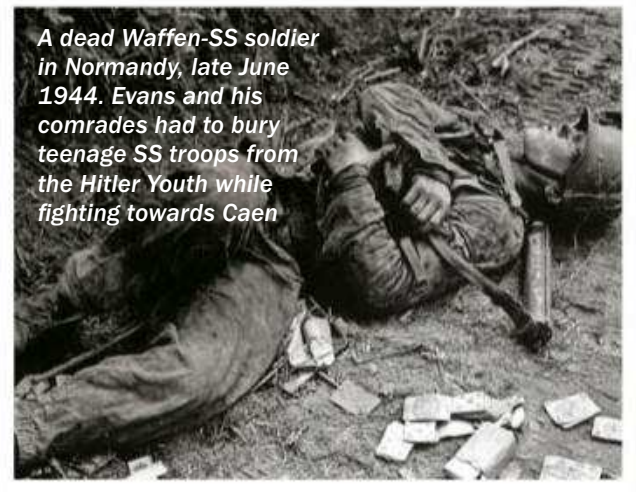
***Right:** Soldiers of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment dug in by a hedge row, 1944. Evans recalls that although the Bren gun was a 'light machine gun', it "wasn't so light after you'd marched 20 miles (32 kilometres) with it!"*

***Below:** The Royal Warwickshire Regiment advances through a wheat field during the final assault on Caen, July-August 1944*

Exhausted men of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment rest in a Dutch village, September 1944. The Warwicks' casualties were so heavy that many men, including Evans, were transferred to other regiments



A British bulldozer pushes bodies into a mass grave at Bergen-Belsen, 19 April 1945. Evans was part of the liberating force that exposed this horrendous crime against humanity



A dead Waffen-SS soldier in Normandy, late June 1944. Evans and his comrades had to bury teenage SS troops from the Hitler Youth while fighting towards Caen

Evans was the driving force behind Wellington's public Peace Garden, which is located in the centre of the Shropshire town

From that time on I stuck to not killing any Germans. I frequently shot over their heads to frighten them. I had no problems with frightening the hell out of them but I wouldn't kill them.

How did you cope with terrible scenes like this?

At the time I was just trying to stay alive, I didn't care about anything else. The Warwicks had 70 per cent casualties, but running away didn't seem a good idea because my own side could have easily shot me.

Bergen-Belsen

What were your experiences after the breakout from Normandy?

A lot more battles happened. They weren't so hard, but it was all the way until we got halfway to Germany. Apart from a fortnight in Belgium we didn't sleep under a roof. The 30 per cent of the Warwicks who were not casualties were also transferred to the Herefordshire Light Infantry in the 11th Armoured Division.

During the winter we were in Holland trying to get over the River Maas. On Christmas Day we had a ceasefire with the Germans. It was much like the truce of 1914: nobody has said anything about it but it did happen. I later met a chap in Germany who admitted that he'd been in the army facing us. He had been working a mortar while I had been firing a Bren. We were playing chess at the time and I said, "You missed!" He replied, "So did you!" We got up, shook hands, sat down and got on with the chess. We're all human, that is what makes war so damned stupid.

Can you describe your experiences during the liberation of Bergen-Belsen in April 1945?

When we got into Germany, Belsen happened to be in our way on Lüneberg Heath. We were trolling across when somebody found a place and nobody knew what it was. We'd already emptied a few Allied POW camps, and the Shropshires went into Belsen but were hurriedly taken back out. We arrived almost at the same time but didn't go in. We actually got showers outside Belsen, where we received fresh uniforms. We were deloused because they were worried about cholera and similar diseases.

I looked through the outside wire fence of Belsen and saw some of the prisoners. You could have called them "creatures" rather than the men who were there. It's difficult to describe but you couldn't tell if they were men or women because they weren't really anything. There were some prisoners gathered together standing, and I remember seeing one of them just crumple and die.

We weren't allowed to go in and I wasn't actually allowed to be where I was. The stench of rotting, burnt flesh was unimaginable. It made me angry, and most of us would have gone in, found the guards and shot them. That was what we wanted to do – even me.

Were you aware of Nazi concentration camps at the time?

Not quite. I had met a chap who was part of the Jewish Brigade and they knew all about it, but that was a long time before I saw Belsen. I had some idea of what was happening but not that it was so horrible.

Peaceful public service

To what extent did your war experiences influence your pacifist campaigning?

I didn't have a lot of feelings then. One of the ways of surviving is not to have any feelings. My pacifism took a long time to emerge and I eventually found myself reading Quaker pamphlets. I liked the ideas and started going to meetings and eventually joined. Being a Quaker means that it's OK to disagree, and there isn't something you have to believe in, it isn't like that. Quaker values have partially influenced my pacifism, and tolerance is part of what most of us think.

However, I'm not really into religion when it comes to pacifism, it's just the sheer stupidity of war. It's not just morally wrong but a self-inflicted wound. What I find myself arguing against is people saying, "There are going to be wars anyway." My Methodist grandfather would say, "There shall always be wars and rumours of wars." He had a strong tendency not to like war but he regarded it as inevitable. It isn't – we can all recognise each other as being different.

What made you decide to open a public peace garden in Wellington in 2012?

I wanted to do something to encourage people to think about peace. I thought we would have a peace garden, and we went through several stages chatting to people and wondering what to do and where it would be. Our criteria was: one, it must be in town somewhere. Two, it must be somewhere obvious where people often travel. Three, it mustn't cost any money. Four, it's got to be open to everybody. The Quakers wanted a Quaker garden but I wanted it for everyone. Now, the people who currently work the garden are two agnostics, one Roman Catholic, one Jew and a couple of Quakers.

A big civic centre was being built and some friends on the council found a narrow, undulating strip nearby. I explained the idea to the council leader and he said, "Yes, we'll do it". We worked out that the council would retain ownership of the land but the garden would belong to the people of Wellington.

What can people plant in the garden?

Anybody can plant anything they want. If people want to plant something for someone who served in a war, or on behalf of an association if they are in favour of peace, then please do. For instance, the Pentecostal Church decided to plant something for black soldiers who were killed during wars. Three Buddhist monks also came and performed a ceremony, which was quite something in Wellington. No one needs to come and ask permission from me, and I might be able to help. It is a public service in the name of peace.

How do you feel about the Royal British Legion following the incident surrounding the Remembrance Sunday parade in 2014?

There are fewer and fewer WWII veterans on parades and I was unfairly treated, but I'm still a member of the British Legion. My father was a founder of the local Wellington branch, and while I don't agree with them I do support them, particularly when it comes to helping wounded soldiers.

What is the main message about pacifism that you consider to be the most important?

If everybody became pacifists, which isn't at all likely, we'd all be a lot better off. War is stupid and not inevitable. Racism used to be thought of as inevitable, but it isn't now. There are all sorts of similar examples. The position of women in society used to be thought of as inevitable and it isn't anymore. Why should wars – which cost no end in money, lives, buildings, and so on – be any different?

Some Americans had the right idea during the Vietnam War when they said, "Hell no, we won't go!" and I was absolutely with them. Wars are eventually stopped, but only when many countries are ruined. It would be so much better for all of us if only we could get rid of this idea that war is inevitable: it is not.

"THERE WERE SOME PRISONERS GATHERED TOGETHER STANDING AND I REMEMBER SEEING ONE OF THEM JUST CRUMPLE & DIE"

Images: George Evans

SUBSCRIBER EXCLUSIVE!

WIN A LIMITED EDITION WATCH

WORTH £389

The official watchmaker for the British Armed Forces present this special design to commemorate the centenary of the 1918 Armistice

At 9.30am on 11 November 1918, Private George Edwin Ellison, of the 5th Royal Irish Lancers, received a fatal bullet wound while on a scouting patrol in the Mons area. He is officially recognised as the last British casualty of WWI, just 90 minutes before the guns fell silent. This final centenary year is a chance to reflect upon and pay tribute to the ultimate sacrifice made by thousands of men like George, who was one of 800 men killed in the six hours between the signing of the Armistice and the agreed time of 11.00am later that day when it would take effect.

In tribute to the centenary of the end of the war, renowned watchmaker Col&MacArthur, official timepiece supplier to the British Armed Forces, has created a special, limited edition design, complete with intricate commemorative details. For instance, George Ellison's initials are placed halfway between the 9 and 10 on the watch face, symbolising 9.30 when he died. Also, in place of the number 11 sits a delicate poppy to denote the 11th hour of the Armistice, and the number 5 is coloured red for the hour the document was signed. Only 1,918 of these watches were ever made – another deliberate reference.

This issue, **History Of War** has one of these unique watches to give away to one lucky magazine subscriber. There is even a free engraving of up to 60 characters of your choice available, to fully personalise the piece. This brings the total prize value to £389.

The competition is open exclusively to subscribers of **History of War**, so entrants will require a valid Subscriber ID in order to qualify. To enter the competition, simply visit **www.historyanswers.co.uk**, answer the simple question, and type in your Subscriber ID.

For more information on Col&MacArthur's full range of quality timepieces, please visit: colandmacarthur.com

George Ellison was the last British soldier to be killed in action in WWI, dying just 90 minutes before the Armistice came into effect

To see the fantastic range of quality timepieces from Col&MacArthur, visit: colandmacarthur.com

FOR A CHANCE TO WIN THIS LIMITED EDITION ARMISTICE 1918 WATCH, VISIT

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By taking part in this competition, you agree to be bound by the terms and conditions below and the competition rules: www.futureplc.com/competition-rules/. Entries must be submitted to via the form at www.historyanswers.co.uk. Competition closes at 00.00 GMT on 30.09.18. Late or incomplete entries will be disqualified. Open to all History of War magazine subscribers who are residents of the UK and are 18 years and over, except employees of Future Publishing Limited ("Future") and Col&MacArthur. Entries limited to one per individual. The winner(s) will be drawn at random from all valid entries received and shall be notified by email. Future reserves the right to substitute any product with an alternative product of equivalent value. The prize is non-transferable and non-refundable. There is no cash alternative. Void where prohibited by law.

MUSEUMS & EVENTS

Discover the Roman Empire's British frontier, Lawrence of Arabia's post-war home and Peter Jackson's new film for the Imperial War Museum

They Shall Not Grow Old reproduces original black and white footage in dramatic colour

The excellent detail of Peter Jackson's digitalised, colourised footage forms complete images from sometimes-poor contemporary footage

THEY SHALL NOT GROW OLD

THE OSCAR-WINNING FILMMAKER DISCUSSES HIS NEW FILM ABOUT WWI, WHICH USES RESTORED FOOTAGE AND VETERAN INTERVIEWS TO PRODUCE AN ASTONISHING NEW INTERPRETATION OF THE CONFLICT

In collaboration with the Imperial War Museum (IWM) and 14-18 NOW, Sir Peter Jackson has directed and produced a new documentary about WWI called *They Shall Not Grow Old*. Using archive footage and extensive veteran testimony from the BBC and IWM, Jackson has used colourisation, 3D and other techniques to reveal the Western Front in unprecedented detail.

How were you approached to make the film?

The IWM approached me about three years ago and asked if I would be interested in doing a documentary for the centenary. They didn't know what it would be, but they've got many hours of WWI footage and wanted to see it used differently.

It took me a while to imagine anything beyond the usual documentaries we've all seen, where a historian walks on the Western Front, talks to the camera and we then see excerpts of archive footage. Then I came up with the thought, "How well can we restore the old footage using all of the computer power that we've got? How far can you go with 100-year-old footage and make it as fresh and new as you possibly can?"

I pitched that to the IWM and they sent us films. We started a process of experimenting, and the results were far beyond anything I imagined. I couldn't believe how sharp and clear the footage was. You can see detail that takes away the fog of 100 years. You're blowing the mists of time away, and it suddenly comes into literal, sharp focus.

What can audiences expect to see?

It is a feature-length film, although it started out as a short. We first discussed that it would be 30 minutes long, but as our techniques got better we've been able to make a 90-minute film, which pleases me.

The film that has emerged focuses on the British infantry experience on the Western Front. It's not the story of the war, it's the story of being a soldier in the war, and the only voices we hear are from the veterans that fought there. We have taken a wide range of people from the BBC and IWM audio archives and put together an account that goes from enlistment to demobilisation. It takes you through the infantry experience and focuses on things like, "What did you eat? Were you scared? What was it like to be in a battle?"

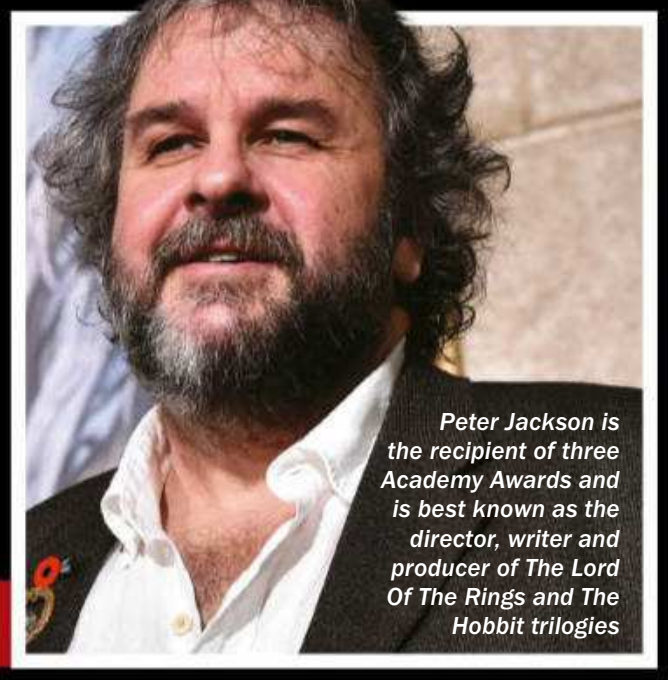
What are your thoughts on the veteran interviews used in the film?

I wanted to stay away from interviews that were done in the 1980s-90s when they were very old men. When those guys got old I couldn't help but feel they were saying what the director wanted them to say, rather than just talking about the war.

The 1960s-70s is the period we used, so that while the guys weren't young they certainly weren't ancient. They were able to recount things incredibly well and talked with a great deal of honesty. There is a lot of fantastic detail that I'd never heard before that we could use. That was the important thing; I wanted them to simply say it as they saw it, without any modern spin.

Do you have any favourite scenes?

One of the things that surprised me, although I knew it on one level, was that we kept finding films of German prisoners helping with first aid. It didn't matter if it was a wounded Brit or German – they were just pitching in along with the British to try to help out once they had been captured.



Peter Jackson is the recipient of three Academy Awards and is best known as the director, writer and producer of The Lord Of The Rings and The Hobbit trilogies

Images: Getty, 14-18 NOW, Imperial War Museum and Wingnut Films

FOR THE FULL INTERVIEW WITH PETER JACKSON VISIT: WWW.HISTORYANSWERS.CO.UK

Also, when you hear the British veterans talking about the Germans you realise how different WWI was to WWII in that regard. It wasn't a political war of hatred, or a regime that was doing despicable things – although obviously during WWI despicable things occurred. The British largely regarded the Germans as being the same as them. They knew the Germans were suffering the same mud, cold and food as they were, and so they had a strange kinship, even though they killed each other in vast numbers.

Have you always had an interest in WWI?

I have. My grandfather was in the South Wales Borderers from 1910-19 so he went through everything. He won the DCM (Distinguished Conduct Medal) at Gallipoli, was wounded on the first day of the Somme and was at Passchendaele. He eventually suffered for it because he died in 1940. He was only 50 but he died from ill health that was sustained from multiple injuries.

My father always spoke about him and would buy WWI books, especially to do with places where my grandfather had been. I used to read those, and it was strange because I had this concept of my British grandfather at Gallipoli but being a Kiwi that campaign is a huge thing in New Zealand.

There were also obviously WWI veterans still alive. I remember in our village there was an old bloke called Alf Fuller who would sit coughing on a park bench because he had been gassed. I would talk to him, and you couldn't grow up in the 60s and 70s without being surrounded by veterans of both world wars.

What do you hope audiences will learn from They Shall Not Grow Old?

What I hope is that it makes you think that those who fought were just the same as us. They were no different, and yet what they experienced was something extraordinary in all sorts of ways, both good and bad. Their human response to what they experienced is strangely familiar, because we all go through times of hardship, suffering, joy and pleasure. We hear these guys talking about the same things that we feel, and you suddenly realise that 100 years has just evaporated, and that makes it more immediate.

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUMS

They Shall Not Grow Old will be given its world premiere as the Special Presentation at the BFI London Film Festival on 16 October 2018. Featuring a post-screening Q&A between Peter Jackson and Mark Kermode, the film will be simultaneously screened across the UK.

For more information on how to book screening tickets visit: www.iwm.org.uk/events/peter-jackson-they-shall-not-grow-old

HADRIAN'S WALL

THIS FORMIDABLE FORTIFICATION STRADDLES THREE ENGLISH COUNTIES AND IS ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS ROMAN STRUCTURES OF ALL TIME

At 117.5 kilometres (73 miles) long, Hadrian's Wall is the largest surviving Roman artefact in the world and a major tourist attraction.

When Emperor Hadrian came to power in 117 CE he wanted to separate his British lands from 'barbarian' Caledonia (modern Scotland) and constructed a hard border. Over approximately six years, three legions built a fortified wall, and Hadrian inspected its progress in 122 AD. The completed structure was an architectural wonder.

Hadrian's Wall included 80 'milecastles', observation towers and 17 larger forts. It was six metres (20 feet) high and sometimes three metres (ten feet) deep. Such was its enduring memory that many people assume that it marks the border between England and Scotland. However, the wall is located entirely south of the modern border.

Visitors can still see ten per cent of the original wall, and there are many places to visit. 'Hadrian's Wall path' runs along its entire length and is well signposted. The best intact section is 17 kilometres (10.5 miles) between the Roman Army Museum near Carvoran and Housesteads Fort. There are also extensive remains at forts such as Birdoswald, Arbeia and Segedunum.

The most famous site is Vindolanda in Northumberland. This former auxiliary fort revealed the 'Vindolanda tablets', which are some of the oldest surviving handwritten documents in Britain and give a unique insight into everyday Roman life.

Hadrian's Wall snakes through dramatic scenery in northern England

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: WWW.HADRIANSWALLCOUNTRY.CO.UK

LAWRENCE OF ARABIA'S HIDEAWAY

A TINY, ISOLATED COTTAGE IN RURAL DORSET, CLOUDS HILL WAS HOME TO ONE OF WORLD WAR I'S MOST ICONIC FIGURES

T.E. Lawrence is best known for his liaison role during the Arab Revolt in WWI, where he helped to unify Arab forces against the Ottoman Empire and led military campaigns that culminated in the capture of Damascus in 1918. He received heavy media coverage, which resulted in him becoming known as 'Lawrence of Arabia'.

Lawrence was deeply unsettled by the public adulation, and the shame he felt in failing to achieve a united Arab state caused him to retreat from public life. While deliberately serving as an ordinary serviceman in the British armed forces, Lawrence rented a small, spartan cottage called Clouds Hill near his camp at Bovington, Dorset. The cottage became a comforting retreat for Lawrence, and it remains in almost the same condition as it was when Lawrence died in 1935.

Now owned by the National Trust, Clouds Hill is an intriguing microcosm of Lawrence's life and still contains many of his possessions. Items include his gramophone, sleeping bag, reading bed, a tailor-made chair and his personally designed bathroom. His outside motorbike shed contains a small display about his life as well as basic tea and coffee-making facilities. There is also a picnic area on a hill overlooking the cottage that Lawrence used to climb on most evenings to meditate.

Despite his great fame, Lawrence renounced a potentially wealthy and privileged life to live in this rented cottage

The 'Music Room' was where Lawrence entertained distinguished literary visitors, including Thomas Hardy, E.M. Forster, George Bernard Shaw and Robert Graves

Lawrence housed his beloved motorcycles in this garage, although he was tragically killed in a riding accident nearby in May 1935

National Trust

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: WWW.NATIONALTRUST.ORG.UK

REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books & films

THE LAST WITNESS

Q+A WITH DIRECTOR PIOTR SZKOPIAK

NEW LIGHT IS PLACED UPON THE FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY OF THE KATYN MASSACRE OF 1940 IN THIS ANGLO-POLISH HISTORICAL THRILLER

Based on true events, director Piotr Szkopiak's new film *The Last Witness* is a historical thriller set in post-war England in 1947. It follows an ambitious British journalist, Stephen Underwood, as he uncovers a multi-layered conspiracy concerning the harrowing murder of 22,000 Polish officers, executed by Stalin's secret police in 1940, and is today remembered as 'The Katyn Massacre'.

How did you set about adapting the real history, as well as the Paul Szambowski play, to the big screen?

We've all watched that film where it's 'based on a true story' and they have bastardised everything. Here, because it's personal history, Polish history, I have got a huge responsibility in telling that history as factually as I can, but also I'm trying to make a film, an engaging film.

So this is where the idea of making it a thriller came into it. It's ultimately a murder mystery, and that is how we approached it. I have to say, I didn't set out to make a film about Katyn. It is about Katyn by default, because we are seeing it through the eyes of the witness.

He is witness to the massacre, but I'm not telling those details. That is a massive story in itself and Andrzej Wajda made that film [2007's *Katyn*]. I didn't want to make the same film. I saw Paul Szambowski's play, on which the film is based, in 1995. I didn't know the story of the last witness then. I knew about Katyn, but I did not know about Michael Loboda, and him being [in the UK] and him being found hanged, outside of Bristol. That is a true story.

"ALL POLES WERE LEFT TO THE THEIR OWN DEVICES TO LEAVE, AND MY MUM MANAGED TO GET OUT – SHE WENT TO PERSIA, AFRICA, PALESTINE... AND IN 1947 SHE CAME TO BRITAIN"

Paul fictionalised his play around this story. Everything in the film about Loboda is true, except for the one obvious thing, because I have no evidence of that. Officially it is recorded as a suicide.

When Paul looked into it, in a way just like [the film's fictional protagonist] journalist Stephen Underwood, he came to the conclusion that it probably was not suicide. That's where the story came from. Underwood is fictional but Loboda, the last witness, is the core. I had some reactions where some people think the true story is Stephen Underwood. Clearly he is a believable character!

What do you think was the most challenging thing in bringing this story to the screen?

It is just difficult to make a film. I'm not helping myself by setting it in 1947, by having this many characters, where everything in the frame is period. It's not an idea you can just go on the street and shoot.

The practicality and the technical challenge of creating 1947 – that was the biggest challenge! And you have to believe the visuals. If you don't, it takes you out of the story. We had to be solid in every aspect. Getting this right is very important, as I am telling a true story. We had to be spot on. If the smallest thing is wrong its, "Oh, if they couldn't be bothered... Then why should we believe the really important stuff?"

You dedicated the film to the 22,000 Polish officers that were murdered at Katyn. Is there a personal connection to the event for yourself?

My grandfather was on the border force and was captured and put into camp with all those officers. My mum, being an officer's daughter, was put on a train and deported to Siberia. Once Germany invaded Russia, an amnesty was given to the Poles and General Anders brought his people out.

All Poles were left to the their own devices to leave, and my mum managed to get out – she went to Persia, Africa, Palestine... and in 1947 she came to Britain. It's the story of every post-war immigrant.

The Last Witness **is available now on DVD and digital platforms**

THE PHONEY VICTORY

PETER HITCHENS CONFRONTS MANY OF THE ACCEPTED BELIEFS ABOUT WORLD WAR II

Author: Peter Hitchens **Publisher:** I.B. Tauris
Price: £17.99

Peter Hitchens is no stranger to controversy, having passed from Socialist Workers' Party militant to outspoken critic of political correctness. In this book, Hitchens has taken it upon himself to launch a frontal assault on the conventional assumptions surrounding Britain's role in World War II.

The author acknowledges he is treading into perilous territory. The war, as he came to know it as a schoolboy in the late 1950s, was "our moral guide, the origin of modern scripture about good and evil, courage and self-sacrifice". Yet he pulls no punches in denouncing the Yalta peace settlement as a cynical, "large-scale protection racket", with Stalin as the racketeer and the Western Allies as his cowed victims. The mass executions of Cossacks shipped off to Russia by the Allies, the "ethnic cleansing" conducted under the Potsdam Agreement, are just two of the grim episodes rarely discussed because, as the author says, they do not accord with accepted beliefs.

Hitchens insists that Hitler and the Nazi regime had to be crushed and that war at some point was inevitable. His argument is that Britain should have followed the example of the US and waited until the Allied powers were ready to enter the war in a position of military and diplomatic strength.

It was wrong, he says, to give Poland effective control over Britain's decision to declare war, which he describes as "one of the gravest diplomatic mistakes ever made by a major country". This was a consequence of the March 1939 Munich Agreement that allowed other powers to dictate and hasten the timing of war in ways that did not suit Britain's main ally, France. Five months later Britain signed a treaty agreeing to guarantee Polish independence, less than a week before the German invasion.

Poland emerges in the book as a pretext for war, not a reason. As a consequence, the timing of the declaration of war nearly led an unprepared Britain to defeat, which Hitchens says would almost certainly have been the outcome had the USSR been defeated by Hitler. Poland was swiftly conquered and dismantled in the face of unpreparedness and a lack of will by Britain and France to act to save the country. Germany almost as quickly took charge in much of Scandinavia, as a result of Churchill's disastrous Norway adventure. The German offensive through Belgium and Holland destroyed the French army and expelled Britain from the continent for the next four years.

"HITCHENS INSISTS THAT HITLER AND THE NAZI REGIME HAD TO BE CRUSHED AND THAT WAR AT SOME POINT WAS INEVITABLE"

Yet a war, begun in uncertainty and confusion, continuing in defeat, evacuation and bankruptcy, became in the popular imagination the war that restored goodness to the world. Hitchens criticises this as a simplistic interpretation of reality. He brings to light some of the uncomfortable aftermath – the Stalinist purges, the "atrocious butcher's bill from Indian partition in 1947", the transfer of up to 14 million ethnic Germans out of Eastern Europe, mostly agreed to by the Allies, and the expulsion of Arabs from Israel. The blood-soaked uprisings by East Berliners in 1953, the Hungarians in 1956 and the Prague Spring of 1968 then followed.

Hitchens emphasises that whatever happened after the war cannot be equated to the barbarism of the Nazis. In highlighting these atrocities, he warns against failing to condemn the post-war abuses against humanity.

***Left**: Hitler watching German soldiers march into Poland in September 1939*

CULT OF A DARK HERO

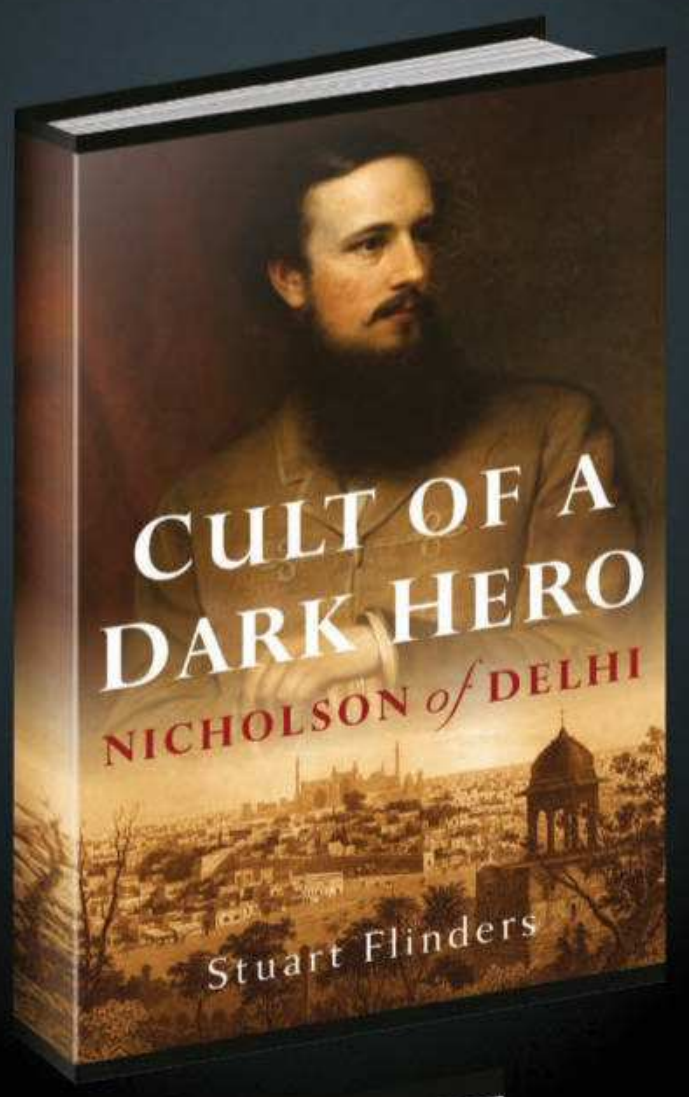
STUART FLINDERS EXPLORES THIS CONTROVERSIAL VICTORIAN SOLDIER, WHO BECAME A CULT FIGURE

Author: Stuart Flinders **Publisher:** I.B. Tauris **Price:** £25.00

The final, successful attack on Delhi by British forces during the Sepoy Mutiny took place in September 1857. The offensive was led by the redoubtable John Nicholson, one of the Indian army's legendary heroes. Nicholson, a 36-year-old giant of a man, was known as an unsmiling egotist and a bully who harboured a deep dislike of the Indians. Two of his brothers had been murdered in India and he himself had discovered the mutilated corpse of one of them. On that fateful day, Nicholson galloped full fury at the Kashmiri Gate, which had been blown in by sappers. That is where he took the bullet that was to bring his adventurous life to close a few days later.

Stuart Flinders has brought this towering, controversial Victorian hero to life in a biography that draws on previously unpublished source material, including diaries and letters of contemporaries. Nicholson was a cult figure in his own day, and the soldier was revered as 'Nikal Seyni'. He inspired respect and fierce allegiance from the troops under his command. Many tribesmen of the North-West Frontier belonged to this sect and, astonishingly, after Nicholson's death more than a few converted to Christianity. This was despite his deep sense of racial supremacy and conviction of Britain's right to rule India. "From a modern perspective," the author explains, "it is his attitude towards Indians and his use of extra-judicial violence that makes Nicholson such a disturbing figure".

Nevertheless, it is a curious fact that while memorials to Britain's colonial servants are reviled in their own country, in Delhi, where Nicholson is buried in an un-vandalised grave, thousands of people travel the Nicholson Road every day without giving it a second thought.



DER KAPITÄN

THE LIFE OF THE "CONTEMPORARY KNIGHT" U-BOAT CAPTAIN HANS ROSE

Authors: Markus F. Robinson and Gertrude J. Robinson
Publisher: Amberley **Price:** £20.00

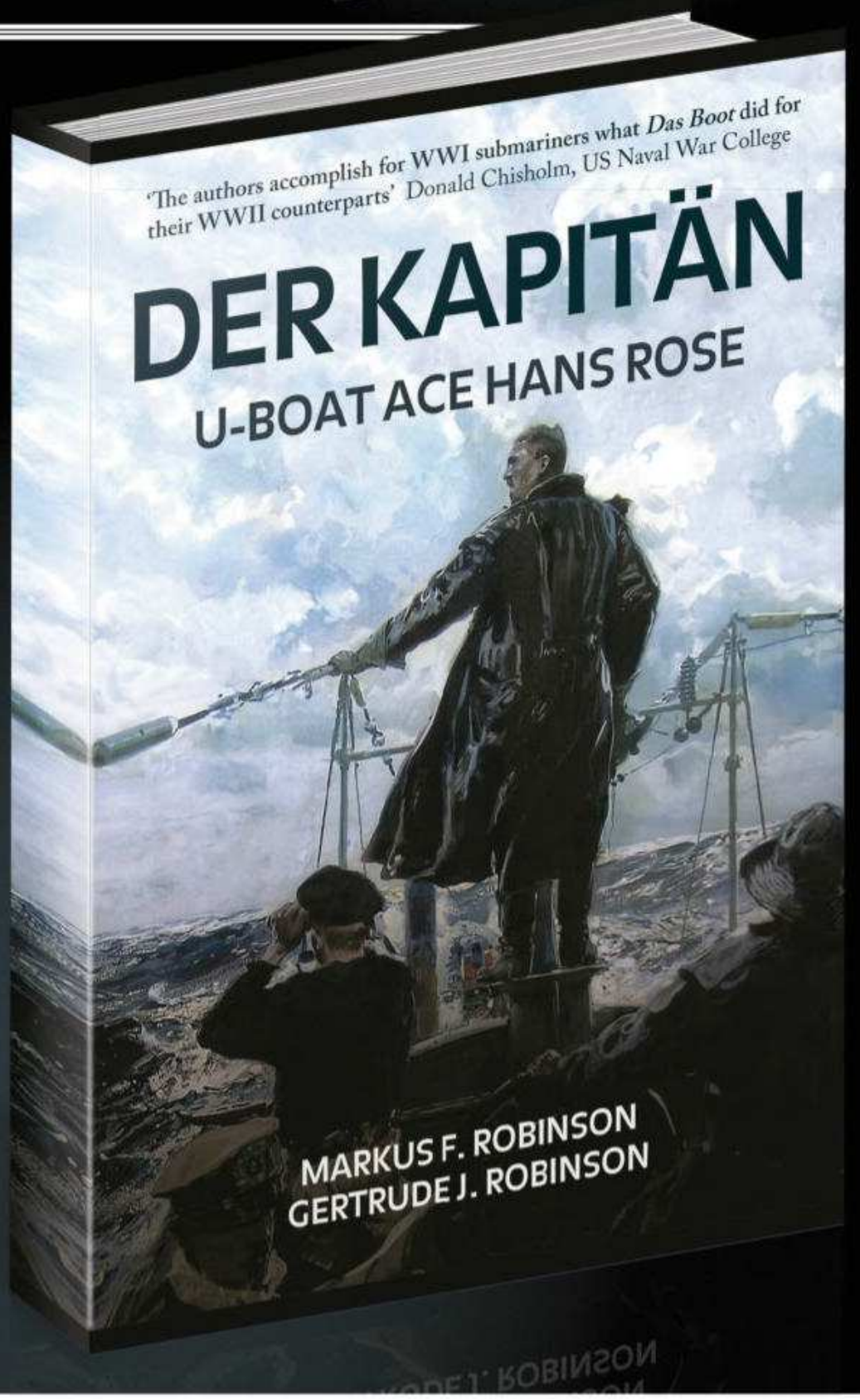
Hans Rose was Germany's most successful U-boat ace during the convoy period of World War I, when submarine attacks were at their most difficult and dangerous. Rose was also one of the most highly decorated German naval commanders of the war, respected even by his enemies and famous for his humanity and fairness in battle. There were engagements in which Rose would torpedo a ship and then wait until all the lifeboats were filled. He would then throw a tow line, give the victims food, keeping all the survivors together until a rescuing destroyer appeared on the horizon, when he would let go and submerge.

The authors have put together a narrative that is likely to stand as the definitive biography of this remarkable officer. Their research is well documented and unique, and thanks to the generosity of the Rose family, they present for the first time Rose's personal papers, along with new information from the naval archives in Germany and the Krupp archives.

Rose served Germany with distinction in both world wars. In WWII, however, he ran a serious risk by crossing paths with Hitler on several occasions. "Rose was a truly contemporary knight," the authors say, "though one called upon to play his chivalrous role at a dark time in Germany's history".

During the course of WWI, German U-boats destroyed 6,394 Allied merchant vessels, totalling almost 12 million tons – a devastating toll that even First Sea Lord Admiral John Jellicoe believed would force an Allied surrender. The German onslaught was blunted thanks to the introduction of armed convoys, but in the interim, Rose alone chalked up at least 80 kills.

"DURING THE COURSE OF WWI, GERMAN U-BOATS DESTROYED 6,394 ALLIED MERCHANT VESSELS, TOTALLING ALMOST 12 MILLION TONS"



THE ESCAPE ARTISTS

29 OFFICERS ATTEMPT AN AUDACIOUS ESCAPE FROM HOLZMINDEN POW CAMP, NICKNAMED 'HELLZMINDEN' FOR ITS REPUTATION FOR CRUELTY

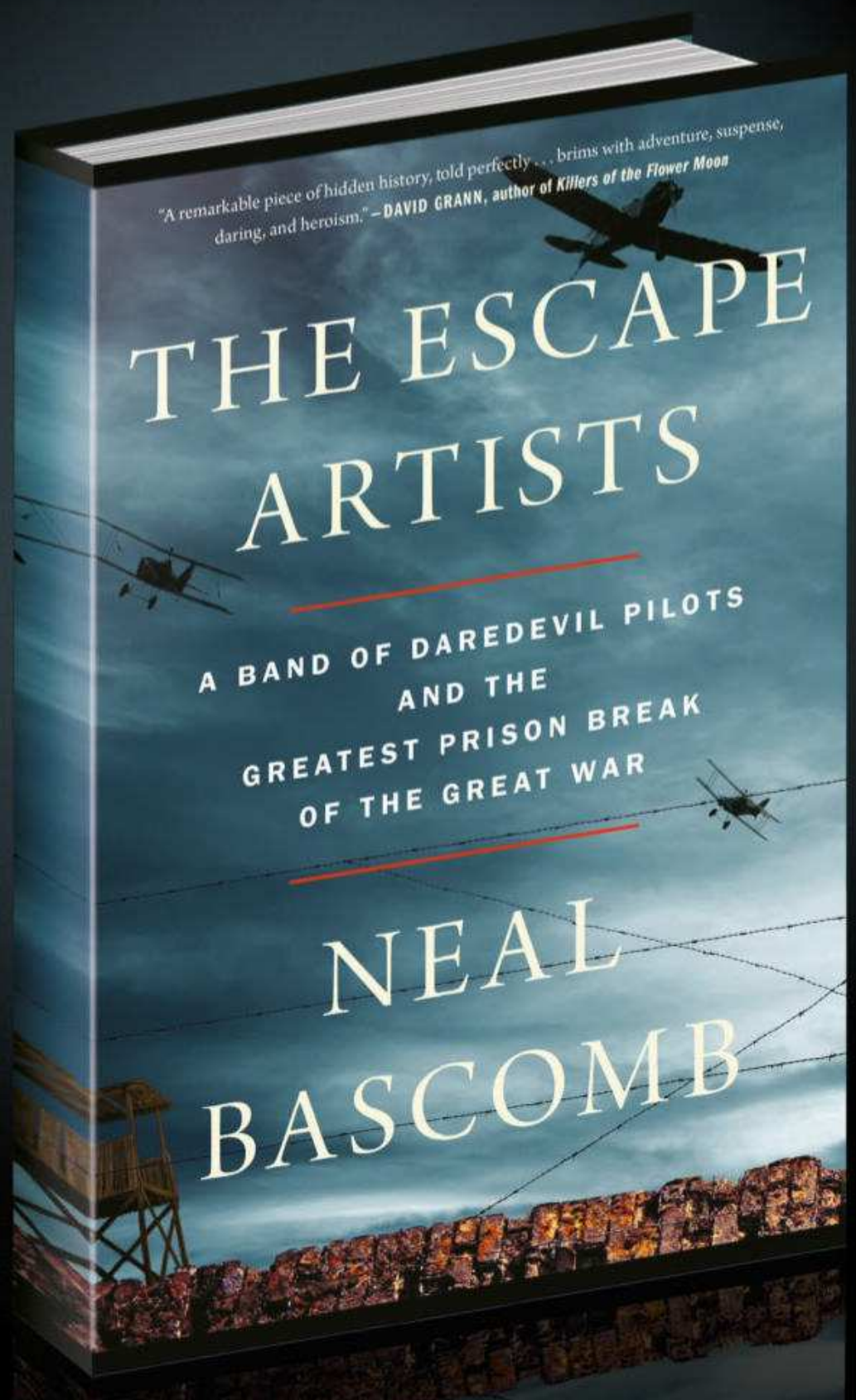
Author: Neal Bascomb **Publisher:** John Murray
Price: £20.00

In 1918, a few months before the Armistice ended World War I, a group of 29 British officers escaped through a tunnel dug under the noses of heavily armed German guards at the Holzminden prisoner of war camp, situated southwest of Hanover. The men dug for nine months using just cutlery and bowls, before escaping in July 1918. Of these 29 men, 19 were caught and ten reached Holland on foot. The Germans were understandably enraged to learn of the arrival of the prisoners to safety in early August, to the extent that the commanding general in Hanover offered a large reward for their recapture.

Holzminden was the biggest German POW camp for officers. The prison held 550 officers and 100 orderlies, and a particularly unpleasant place it was: after it opened in September 1917 there were 17 escape attempts in the first month alone. The prisoners called the camp 'Hellzminden', and the camp commandant, Karl Niemeyer, had an appalling reputation for cruelty. He was a vindictive character who made life particularly hellish for the soldiers. Torture and summary execution were not unknown at the camp. Niemeyer and his twin brother Heinrich, who was kommandant of the camp at Clausthal, had lived in Milwaukee,

"KARL NIEMEYER, WHOM THE PRISONERS NICKNAMED 'MILWAUKEE BILL', CAME AWAY SPEAKING A PIDGIN VARIETY OF ENGLISH, EPITOMISED IN HIS FAMOUS PHRASE, 'YOU THINK I DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE ENGLISH, BUT I DO. I KNOW DAMN ALL ABOUT YOU'"

***Below:** Kaserne B at Holzminden, with prisoners and guards, 1918*



Wisconsin, for 17 years. Despite the American sojourn, Karl Niemeyer, who the prisoners nicknamed 'Milwaukee Bill', came away speaking a pidgin variety of English, epitomised in his famous phrase, "You think I do not understand the English, but I do. I know damn all about you."

Captain David Gray, the 'Father of the tunnel', was a Royal Flying Corps flight leader, and "aggression in the sky was his speciality". Trimly built, with an erect posture, he is described by the author as "every inch the military man", a wartime hero who could have leapt off the pages of a John Buchan novel. Gray was captured after crash-landing his shot-up F.E.2 bomber in a field crowded with German infantry. Soon after his internment in Holzminden, Gray witnessed and documented Niemeyer's brutal regime. He had no doubt that the only hope of survival was to engineer an escape. He did not yet know how, but he never lost confidence that with the camp packed with a master's guild of breakout artists, an opportunity would arise. This was achieved in collaboration with other escape artists, notably Wing Commander Charles Rathborne.

In this authoritative and entertaining narrative, the acclaimed American military historian Neal Bascomb describes how the escapees crawled into a 41-cm (16-inch) high, 55-metre (180-feet) long tunnel, 1.83 metres (six feet) underground to find their way to freedom, the culmination of gruelling toil in oxygen-starved darkness. The men survived the digging ordeal by designing an ingenious ventilation system and employing several ruses, using fake uniforms and official papers. In all, 100 prisoners were due to escape, but only 29 made it through the tunnel. At that point, the tunnel collapsed, and the 30th man became stuck in a terrifying situation.

The dash to the Allied lines was led by Rathborne, who hid on board a train and reached the Dutch frontier after three days. The ten great escapers were awarded medals at Buckingham Palace by George V.

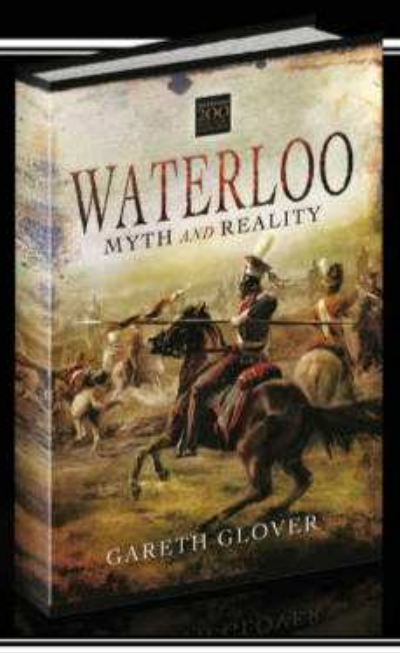
5 BEST BOOKS ON

WATERLOO

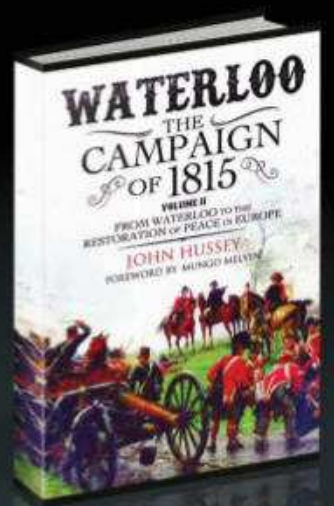
ONE OF EUROPE'S MOST IMPORTANT BATTLEFIELDS HAS BEEN WIDELY WRITTEN ABOUT, AND FROM DIFFERENT NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Waterloo: Myth And Reality (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2014)
Gareth Glover

Many books were released for the bicentennial of Waterloo, but few were as clearly written and as challenging as Glover's monograph. Highlighting many myths about the battle, the author provides convincing evidence to support his version of the events. Four years after its release, this work remains an essential resource not only for readers who are unfamiliar with the Battle of Waterloo but also for those who are already acquainted with the downfall of Napoleon.

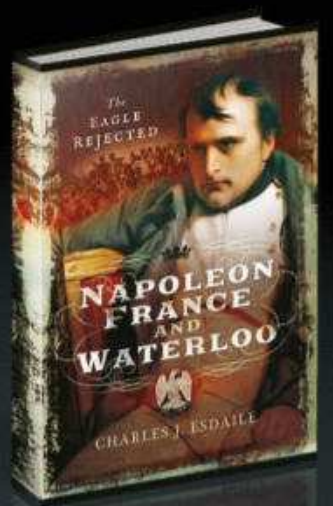


"A METICULOUS ACCOUNT OF ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CAMPAIGNS IN HISTORY"



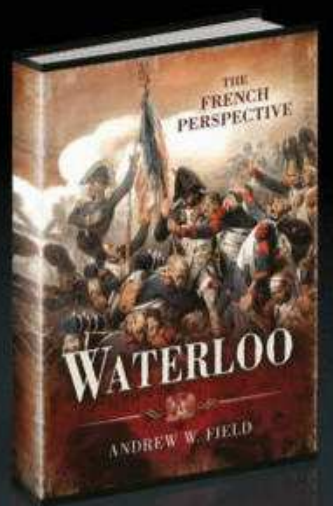
Waterloo: The Campaign Of 1815: Volume I and Volume II
John Hussey

This two-volume work provides a detailed analysis of the Hundred Days based on sources in four languages. Going into the minds of the commanders and providing several maps, Hussey offers a meticulous account of one of the most important campaigns in history. It also offers a political dimension and explains how political considerations affected military operations. This authoritative work is simply one of the best accounts of the Waterloo campaign.



Napoleon, France And Waterloo: The Eagle Rejected
Charles Esdaile

The Waterloo campaign is almost always analysed from a military viewpoint. Interestingly, Charles Esdaile looks at the story from the perspective of the French home front – an aspect neglected by most English-speaking historians. Drawing on archives, diaries and memoirs, his book is a refreshing addition on how 18 June 1815 could have turned out differently. The author examines whether a French victory at Waterloo would have changed the course of history. This counterfactual exercise is useful to understand how motivated and prepared the French were in 1815.



Waterloo: The French perspective
Andrew Field

In the English-speaking world, the story of the Napoleonic Wars is often told from a British perspective. Exploring in a methodical manner the Hundred Days, starting with Napoleon's return from Elba, Field relies on more than 90 French accounts. This book sheds light on important issues, such as the Prussian intervention and the Old Guard's attack. This monograph is an essential read for those who want to look beyond British-centric histories of the battle.

Waterloo Les Mensonges: Les Manipulations De L'histoire Enfin Révélées
Bernard Coppens

As can be expected, several books on the Battle of Waterloo are released every year in the French-speaking world. While most offer rehearsed arguments, Coppens's *Waterloo Les Mensonges* stands out. In this monograph, the Belgian historian challenges several myths and tales fabricated after the battle. He demonstrates convincingly that Napoleon was careless when planning his strategy and failed to consider a Prussian intervention. Coppens also highlights how the French emperor managed to rewrite the battle while in captivity. Nearly ten years after its release, this book remains a must-read for those who understand French.

HISTORY of WAR

Future PLC Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA

Editorial
Editor **Tim Williamson**
timothy.williamson@futurenet.com
Senior Designer **Curtis Fermor-Dunman**
Features Editor **Tom Garner**
Production Editor **James Price**
Group Editor in Chief **James Hoare**
Senior Art Editor **Duncan Crook**

Contributors
Uri Berger, Marianna Bukowski, Murray Dahm, Paul Garson, Mike Haskew, Gilad Jaffe, Leigh Neville, Nigel Mark Simner, Jules Stewart, William Welsh, Bernard Wilkin

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Advertising
Media packs are available on request
Commercial Director **Clare Dove**
clare.dove@futurenet.com
Regional Advertising Director **Mark Wright**
mark.wright@futurenet.com
Advertising Manager **Toni Cole**
toni.cole@futurenet.com
Media Sales Executive **Jagdeep Maan**
jagdeep.maan@futurenet.com

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Lieutenant John F. Kennedy aboard PT-109. After the sinking, Kennedy towed an injured crewmate in the water by holding the strap of his lifejacket in his teeth

JFK'S COCONUT

The future American president scrawled a distress signal on this shell after his patrol boat was sunk during the Pacific Campaign in 1943

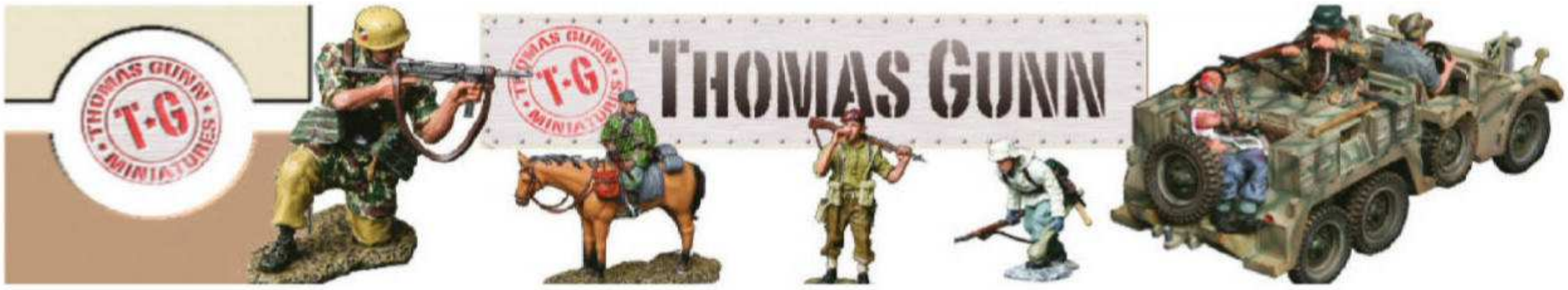
John F. Kennedy's victory in the 1960 United States presidential election was not just based on his charisma and television debate performances but also on his heroic war record. In August 1943 he was a 26-year-old lieutenant in the US Navy Reserve and had been commanding a patrol torpedo boat called PT-109 since April.

PT-109 was part of Motor Torpedo Squadron Two, which was based in the Solomon Islands. On 2 August 1943 the vessel was rammed and sunk by the Japanese destroyer Amagiri in the Blackett Strait, and two of Kennedy's crewmembers were killed. He organised the 11 surviving crewmen in the water, and they swam over five kilometres (three miles) to a deserted island. Kennedy then personally swam to other islands to find food and supplies, before returning to his crew. He then made them swim an additional three kilometres (1.9 miles) to Olasana Island.

The 12 men survived for six days on Olasana with water, coconuts and salvaged cookies before they were found by two Solomon Islanders who had been dispatched by Australian coast guards. Kennedy gave them a message, which he carved onto a coconut shell, to deliver to the PT base at Rendova Island. The message read, "NAURO ISL… COMMANDER…NATIVE KNOWS POS'IT…HE CAN PILOT…11 ALIVE…NEED SMALL BOAT…KENNEDY".

The crew were finally rescued on 8 August, and Kennedy was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal as well as the Purple Heart. The incident permanently damaged his back, but Kennedy became a war hero, and his survival story helped to launch his political career.

***Right:** Kennedy kept his life-saving coconut shell and had it encased in wood. He later used it as a paperweight on his desk in the Oval Office*



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